

King expected to chair Cabinet session today

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah is expected to chair a Cabinet session today during which the government may declare plans to take control of the Kingdom's privately owned wells as part of contingency efforts to fend off an expected water shortage compounded by the current drought, officials said. The plan is also expected to limit domestic water supplies this summer and may introduce measures to limit agricultural production to less water-intensive crops. The government will insist on obtaining its full amount of water from Israel as stipulated in the 1994 peace treaty and on getting more of its water share from Syria.

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Jordanian, Egyptian, PNA FMs meet today

AMMAN (Petra) — The foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian National Authority today will hold talks on the peace process, particularly obstacles facing Palestinian negotiations ahead of May 4, the target date of declaring a Palestinian state. Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khanib said the meeting will cover issues concerning final status negotiations. Khanib added that Jordan is concerned about the meeting, the first to be held at the trilateral level. "The Kingdom and Egypt give utmost priority to supporting the Palestinian... negotiations," Khanib told the Jordan News Agency, Petra. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, Mahmoud Abbas, secretary general of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation's Executive Committee, and Sa'eb Erekat, chief Palestinian negotiator, will also take part in the meeting.

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OSCE pulling 1,400 observers out of Kosovo

OSLO (R) — The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on Friday ordered its 1,400 unarmed observers to leave Serbia's Kosovo province after Paris peace talks broke off in failure. "I have decided that the force shall be withdrawn immediately," OSCE Chairman Knut Vollebæk, who is also Norway's foreign minister, told a news conference. "The security situation has deteriorated too far." The observers, from 38 nations, will leave Kosovo by late Saturday, travelling by road to Skopje in Macedonia. From there, most will fly to Vienna and then back to their homes. About 150 will stay in Skopje ready to return to Kosovo if the fighting eases.

Israeli youth stabbed in Arab east Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — An Israeli youth was stabbed in the chest by a suspected Palestinian assailant in Arab east Jerusalem on Friday, Israeli police said. A police statement said the 14-year-old Israeli arrived home with chest wounds, saying he was stabbed by an Arab youth near a gate to the walled Old City of Jerusalem. He was taken to hospital with moderate injuries. Police said a suspect was arrested at a hostel near the scene of the stabbing. The Israeli youth told police during initial questioning that he was stabbed after he refused "indecent proposals" made by the assailant.

Maoist guerrillas kill 35 in India

PATNA (AFP) — Maoist guerrillas massacred at least 35 villagers in the latest eruption of inter-caste violence in Bihar, India's most lawless state, officials said Friday. Journalists who visited the massacre site in Jehanabad district told AFP they counted 40 bodies after the attack by two Maoist guerrilla organisations. About 100 armed insurgents from the left-wing People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) attacked the sleeping upper-caste village of Senari just before midnight on Thursday.

Yeltsin dismisses chief of staff

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin dismissed his chief of staff on Friday and replaced him with a deputy, a Kremlin spokesman said. The spokesman, contacted by Reuters, said Yeltsin had signed an order dismissing Nikolai Bordyuzha from his post as chief of staff and secretary of the influential security council. He said Bordyuzha's former deputy, Alexander Voloshin, would become the new chief of staff. It was not clear who would take up the security council post. Bordyuzha, a 49-year-old former KGB officer, left hospital on Thursday after undergoing treatment for what the Kremlin said was a heart condition.

Seventy drown off S. Leone coast

FREETOWN (AFP) — Seventy people drowned after their boat sank in a raging storm off the southern coast of Sierra Leone, a national boating association here told AFP on Friday. The Sierra Leone Boat Owners Association said the accident occurred on Wednesday near Kega, some 100 kilometres southeast of the capital Freetown. Two men and one woman survived the ordeal, an association official said.

Jordan marks end of official period of mourning for King Hussein

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan on Thursday marked the end of 40 days of official mourning since the passing of King Hussein with religious ceremonies in mosques and churches around the country. His Majesty King Abdullah, accompanied by Royal family members and senior court and government officials, attended the main ceremony held at sunset at King Abdullah Mosque in Amman, during which mosque imams recited verses of the Holy Koran and worshippers prayed for God to bless the late King's soul.

Coinciding with the ceremonies at the mosques, Christian communities in Jordan held special prayers at churches in Amman and the different Jordanian governorates for the soul of the late Monarch.

After the prayers, King Abdullah, Her Majesty Queen Noor and the other members of the Royal family as well as the prime minister, the Senate president and House speaker, senior officials, the King's advisors, the heads of the Jordan Armed Forces, the General Intelligence, Public Security and Civil Defence departments, in addition to heads of professional and trade unions, religious leaders and ambassadors of Arab and foreign states in Amman visited the grave of the late King, where they laid wreaths and recited verses of the Holy Koran.

Also visiting the grave on the grounds of Raghadan



His Majesty King Abdullah leads prayers Thursday at the grave of the late King Hussein in the Royal cemetery (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

Palace were representatives of various public and private organisations, chambers of commerce and industry, heads of Christian communities, and other dignitaries.

Prayers for the soul of the late King were performed at different mosques in the governorates around the country, with a number of Princes attending. Prince Ali attended the ceremony at Madaba Mosque; Prince Faisal at Omar Ben Al Khatib Mosque in Zarqa; Prince Hashem in Aqaba; Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid

in Ma'an; Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad in Karak; Prince Talal Ben Mohammad in Salt; Prince Abbas Ben Ali Ben Nayef in Tafleh; and Prince Firas Ben Ra'd in Mafraq.

Governors of various districts as well as directors of charitable societies and non-governmental organisations distributed food packages to thousands of needy families in their respective areas while the National Aid Fund, the government-sponsored agency which cares for the poor, announced that it will distribute JD100,000 to poor families in various parts of the Kingdom.

Although the 40-day period of public mourning ended Thursday, the three-month period of mourning at the Royal Palace will continue until May.

Syrian President Hafez Assad on Friday sent a cable to King Abdullah at the end of the 40 days of official mourning, saying that the loss of King Hussein was not only a loss for Jordanians but also for Syrians, Arabs and the world.

Lockerbie suspects to be handed over to U.N. chief by April 6, Mandela says

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya is to hand over the two Libyan suspects in the Lockerbie bombing to U.N. chief Kofi Annan by April 6 for trial in the Netherlands. South African President Nelson Mandela announced here Friday.

"The two suspects would be available for the secretary general... on or before the 6th of April, 1999 for their appearance before the court," Mandela said in a speech to the Libyan parliament.

The South African leader said Libya was sending a letter to Annan to inform him of the exact date for the handover of the two Libyans accused of blowing up a Pan Am plane in December 1988 over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people.

"I can today announce to the world that Libya has decided to write to the secretary general of the United Nations to give a firm date for the handing over for trial in the Netherlands of the two Libyan nationals named as suspects in the Lockerbie case," Mandela said.

Mandela was speaking after Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi told members of the Libyan General People's Congress that Libya had received from South Africa and Saudi Arabia "all the guarantees" it needed to allow for a handover of the two Libyans for trial in the Netherlands.

"It was enough for me that Mandela, King Fahd and [Crown] Prince Abdullah [of Saudi Arabia] have given me all the guarantees and asked me to leave them free to act" to settle this affair, Qadhafi said.

"If Great Britain and the United States decide to betray Mandela and King Fahd, we shall not fear that betrayal," the Libyan leader added.

Mandela and a Saudi envoy, Prince Bandar Ben Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, arrived here on Thursday in a bid to clinch a settlement in the 10-year-old Lockerbie bombing case.

They held talks with Qadhafi until late in the night before addressing the Libyan parliament, which the official Libyan news agency JANA has said is the only body competent to make a decision in the Lockerbie case.

In a speech to the People's Congress interrupted by frequent bursts of applause, Mandela outlined the three main points of the agreement.

"A Scottish court shall be convened in the Netherlands for the purpose of trying the two suspects in accordance with Scottish law," Mandela said, adding that the trial would take place "in the presence of international observers appointed by the secretary general of the United Nations."

"Secondly, the suspects if convicted will serve their prison sentence in Scotland under United Nations supervision and with assured access to a Libyan consulate to be established in Scotland," he said.

"Thirdly, sanctions imposed on [Libya] will be frozen immediately upon the arrival of the two suspects in the Netherlands," Mandela said.

"Thereafter the sanctions will be lifted within 90 days of a report of the secretary general to the Security Council stating that [Libya] has complied with the Security Council's resolution," he added.

The United States and Britain on Feb. 26 set a one-month deadline for Libya to surrender the two suspects, Abdul Basset Ali Al Megrahi and Al Amin Khalifa Fhimah, for trial in the Netherlands.

Parliament session extended to April 15

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah on Thursday issued a Royal Decree extending the current session of the Lower House of Parliament until April 15 to enable the chamber to debate the policy statement of the government of Prime Minister Abdul-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh prior to calling for a vote of confidence.

The extension is in line with the Constitution, which stipulates that the government should submit its policy statement to the House within 30 days of its formation.

Rawabdeh's government was formed on March 4. The current session of Parliament was scheduled to recess on March 27.

Lower House Deputy Speaker Bassam Haddadin indicated that no other item will be discussed by the lawmakers during the extension period.

Haddadin said he expected the debate on the government's policy statement to last five days. The policy statement might be submitted to the House on April 3.

The lawmaker said draft laws that were referred to different House committees during the current session were expected to be discussed during the next ordinary session, scheduled to begin on Oct. 1.

He said that during the remainder of the current session, the House and Senate are expected to deal with the log-jam resulting from differences between the two chambers over some unfinished business.

Legislation currently held up in the Senate includes the draft "Law Against Illicit Profit," which would exclude public servants from disclosing their assets and properties upon taking office, and a Youth Law.

Haddadin also said a large delegation of deputies is expected to head for Brussels to attend a parliamentary conference there on April 10.

Meanwhile, a Royal Decree issued on Thursday accepted the resignation of former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and Adnan Abu Odeh from the Upper House following their appointments as the chief of the Royal Court and political advisor to the King, respectively.

Arafat threatens new intifada over state proclamation

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat threatened on Friday to call for a renewed intifada, or uprising, if Israel tries to stop him from proclaiming an independent Palestinian state.

Arafat, in a speech to some 3,000 members of his Fatah movement in this West Bank town, declined, however, to reveal whether he would declare a Palestinian state on May 4, as he has promised previously.

"We carried out the longest intifada in history," Arafat, the

president of the self-rule Palestinian National Authority, said in a reference to the 1987 to 1993 uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories.

"They [the Israelis] should know that we can start it again if they try to prevent us from exercising our rights," he said.

"The state will be established with Jerusalem as its capital whether they like it or not," Arafat said. "If they don't like it they can drink the waters of the Dead Sea."

Arafat and other Palestinian leaders have said previously that

they will announce the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on May 4, when the five-year interim autonomy period expires under the Oslo peace accords.

Israel has threatened to annex parts of the West Bank if the Palestinians go ahead with their proclamation.

Arafat dismissed the Israeli warnings.

"We are not afraid of threats," he said, recalling the March 1968 battle of Karameh in which hundreds of Palestinian guerrillas managed to push

back the Israeli army.

"We, the Fatah and PLO, are ready to fight a new battle of Karameh every single day if anyone tries to stop us from exercising our rights, particularly that of proclaiming an independent state," Arafat said.

Using his nom de guerre, Abu Ammar, members of the crowd called on Arafat to stick by his previously stated intention of declaring a Palestinian state on May 4.

"Don't wait, Abu Ammar, declare a state in May," they cried. Arafat responded with a

smile and a "V" for victory sign.

Arafat also told the crowd he would continue his world tour aimed at drumming up support for Palestinian independence.

He said he notably planned trips to Canada, Japan, Senegal and China "to ensure Arab and international support for the proclamation of a state."

He also said he had received assurances from South African President Nelson Mandela, chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, that the 113 non-aligned members would recognise a Palestinian state.

Israel revokes VIP status of three top Palestinian officials

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel and the Palestinians are involved in a fierce struggle over Jerusalem less than two months ahead of Israeli general elections and the possible declaration of a Palestinian state.

In the latest skirmish, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government took a swipe Thursday at three Palestinian officials for greeting foreign diplomats at Orient House, the Palestine Liberation Organisation's headquarters in Arab east Jerusalem.

Israel stripped Faisal Hussein, the top Palestinian official in Arab east Jerusalem; Ziad Abu Ziad, a Palestinian minister without portfolio; and Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, of their VIP passes.

The passes enable Palestinian officials to pass through Israeli military roadblocks on the West Bank and the edge of Jerusalem with relative ease.

Hussein said Friday that he would "not change one iota" of his activities in Jerusalem.

"There is no reason why Palestinians should suffer from the Israeli election campaign," he told Israel Radio in a reference to Netanyahu's campaign claims that he is the only one capable of "defending" Jerusalem.

Abu Ziad decried "the escalation" in tension by the Jewish state. A Palestinian National Authority (PNA) official, who asked not to be identified, said: "These steps will never change the fact that Arab east Jerusalem, the future capital of the Palestinian state, is occupied by Israel."

Israeli security sources were also critical of the sanctions imposed by Netanyahu. They

were quoted by the newspaper Haaretz as calling the removal of the passes a "pointless provocation."

The sources were also critical of the timing of the decision.

They said it came just as the PNA was increasing its efforts to prevent anti-Israeli violence by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and Islamic Jihad ahead of the May 17 elections.

Ehud Barak, chief of the opposition Labour Party and a leading contender in the prime ministerial race, reminded voters that Netanyahu "had

announced before he was elected in 1996 that he would close Orient House but never did anything about it."

Israel maintains that the Palestinians cannot carry out diplomatic and political activities in its capital.

The battle for Jerusalem also entered the international arena again this month.

Israel protested to Germany, president of the European Union, against the body's March 1 message stating that Jerusalem in its entirety was a "separate entity" and not part of the Jewish state.

At least 60 killed, over 100 injured in 'terrorist' blast in southern Russia

VLADIKAVKAZ (AFP) — At least 60 people were killed and more than 100 injured Friday when a bomb ripped through a busy market in the southern Russian city of Vladikavkaz, a blast immediately blamed on "terrorists."

President Boris Yeltsin sent top security officials to the scene, after the bomb exploded amid sacks of potatoes in the centre of the market, 50 kilometres from the border with breakaway Chechnya.

The blast was equivalent to some 10 kilograms of TNT. It killed at least 60 people and injured 101 others, local security director Vladimir Bezuglov told AFP.

"We are speaking of an

unprecedented terrorist act," said Lev Dzugayev, a spokesman for President Boris Yeltsin's regional representative.

"There are forces that want to destabilise the situation, who do not accept peace," Television stations interrupted programmes to air government appeals for citizens to donate blood and stay calm.

"We found a crater that is one metre wide at the very centre of the pavilion," Dzugayev said. "There were lots of people there at the time. The blast occurred at 11:25 a.m., so there were many victims."

Footage broadcast by Moscow's NTV television showed a devastating scene complete with bloodied bodies, wrecked cars and stalls strewn across the outdoor market.

"I did not even hear the explosions," said one dazed victim, her clothes torn and bloodied as she stood amid the wreckage. "Suddenly my face hit against the ground, and then the scales fell on top of me."

A 15-metre wall enclosing the market was blown apart by the blast.

The mangled bodies of wounded people were rushed to ambulances in vegetable carts. Dzugayev said the regional hospitals had space but were desperately short of supplies to treat all the victims.

"Most of the hospitalised victims were hurt by the shrapnel," doctor Kazbek Gusov told the television station.

Vladikavkaz is the capital of North Ossetia, which forms part of the volatile north Caucasus region, and shares a border with Chechnya.

North Ossetia has strained relations with neighbouring Ingushetia due to a territorial dispute that led to a brief conflict in 1992 in which 500 people died.

On Thursday, some 10,000 people rallied in Nazran, capital of neighbouring Ingushetia to demand the return of the contested territory.

The entire volatile region has repeatedly threatened to spiral into violence since Russian forces quit the Chechen

Republic in 1996 after waging a 21-month war there that left some 80,000 soldiers and civilians dead.

Tension has surged in recent weeks due to the abduction of a Russian envoy, General Gennady Shipagin, in Chechnya earlier this month.

Chechen and Russian officials had been expected to enter into negotiations in an effort to calm the situation before the Vladikavkaz explosion took place.

Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, asked to head the investigation by Yeltsin, sent a telegram of condolence to relatives of the blast victims.



Military men survey the damage after a bomb explosion Friday at a market in the southern Russian city of Vladikavkaz (AFP photo)

Mainstream parties will shrink considerably in elections — poll

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's two largest political parties will shrink considerably as a result of May 17 elections, continuing a trend started in 1996 when Israel switched to a new election system, according to a poll published Friday.

The poll results suggested that whoever is elected Israel's prime minister would have trouble forming a coalition government because of the proliferation of small parties.

The opposition Labour Party would win only 28 seats in the 120-member parliament, down from 34 in 1996. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud bloc would get 20 seats, down from 32, and

the new centrist party would receive 13 seats.

The rest would be split among 12 other parties, said a gallop poll in the Maariv Daily which covered 505 Israelis and quoted a four per cent margin of error.

Israelis vote for prime minister and parliament with two separate ballot slips. The new prime minister has to form a majority coalition in the parliament to govern.

Even a coalition of the three largest parties, headed by bitter political rivals, would command only 61 seats. According to the poll, the alternative would be to stitch together a coalition with two of the main parties and a long list of smaller

ones. Netanyahu was in office less than three years before his parliamentary majority disappeared and his government fell in December. Critics of the election system charge that allowing voters to cast separate ballots for premier and parliament weakens the main parties and strengthens single-issue and special-interest factions. Before 1996, Israelis voted for a party, and after the election, party leaders competed against each other to assemble coalitions.

A poll in another paper indicated that Netanyahu and Labour candidate Ehud Barak tied at 36 per cent in the race for prime minister. Centrist candidate Yitzhak Mordechai trailed with 16

per cent, and far-right candidate Benny Begin had 6 per cent. If no candidate gets 50 per cent in the first round, a runoff would pit the two top finishers against each other on June 1.

The poll, conducted by the local Dahaf Institute for the daily Yediot Ahronot, predicted that Barak would defeat Netanyahu 47 to 44 per cent — a result that fell within the 4.5 per cent margin of error claimed by the pollsters, who questioned 560 Israeli adults. The poll indicated that if Mordechai reached the second round, he would trounce Netanyahu, 52 to 41 per cent.

Netanyahu visit to ex-Soviet Union merely electioneering — newspaper

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's upcoming tour of Russia, Ukraine and Georgia is intended to impress Israeli immigrants from the former Soviet Union ahead of May 17 elections here, the Yediot Ahronot newspaper charged Friday.

Netanyahu and Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon will go to Moscow Sunday at the beginning of the tour aimed at persuad-

ing Russian leaders to halt military technology transfers to Iran, officials said.

But the newspaper, which insists that the real target is the 800,000 Israelis from the former Soviet Union, says Netanyahu hopes Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze will join him in a broadcast to Israel on their friendship.

Netanyahu cancelled a meeting with Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev in order to have

enough time for "various campaign stops" including at Jewish religious organizations, the paper said.

The prime minister also invited journalists from Russian-language newspapers in Israel to accompany him to maximise news media coverage. Yediot said.

Netanyahu spokesman Aviv Bushinsky rejected the accusations, which he said were "spread... to sabotage the visit of the prime minister, who is going to

meet heads of state and government and sign a security accord with Ukraine."

Yediot also said there was "some historical irony" in Netanyahu visiting the Kremlin while Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will be meeting U.S. President Bill Clinton at the White House.

"Several years ago it was the other way around," the paper lamented.

Top Iraqi painter fights 'mind embargo'

By Jihan Ammar
Agence France Presse

BAGHDAD — Widad Al Orfali returned to her native Baghdad after a two-year absence, as the city was being bombed.

The leading Iraqi artist drove back into the capital two days after the U.S. and Britain launched the four-night Operation Desert Fox air war in December.

"Iraqis love to travel," she said, leaving one to ponder the irony.

While many of her contemporaries are now in exile, Widad, who has lived in New York, Paris, Sudan and Tunisia with her diplomat husband Hamid Al Azawi, believes, "East or West, home is best."

Orfali lives in a two-storey ornate villa, fronted by a tiled garden, with her two daughters and husband. Her son, an art dealer, lives upstairs.

Now she has returned, the painter has decided to open a gallery, the Orfali art gallery she opened in 1988, the Iraqi capital's first private gallery.

Over the years, many additions were made and the gallery grew into a cultural center offering musical concerts, poetry readings and language courses plus art exhibitions — all without charge. But the "embargo against the mind," as Orfali refers to the U.N.-imposed sanctions on Iraq, has meant the deterioration of many of the city's buildings.

Upon her return, the painter found the gallery "dirty and sad." She announced on the spot that it would be relocated.

Orfali talked excitedly as she walked round her new space, located around the corner from the first gallery, in the trendy Baghdad neighbourhood of Al

Mansour. As high-spirited as ever, the 70-year-old was planning far into the future.

"We won't wait for death," she insists.

During the 1991 Gulf War, the artist's home was overrun with people who passed the time playing music. Orfali spent much of her time in her studio diligently painting away as the bombs dropped.

Running the gallery and cultural center again promises to take a great deal of her energy.

"I want to stop painting," she said. "I'm tired."

For the major part of her career, Orfali's work has been as grand in size as it is intricate in detail.

She is best known for her oil and water colours of fantastical Andalusian cities. To complete pieces one metre by two would take 15-17 hours daily, for months.

"I run away from reality and live in these cities," she said. "This is my Baghdad."

Orfali is from a disappearing class in Iraq — old money. The venue she has chosen for lunch, the Shooting Club, seems to be clinging to its fading elegance.

Her father, Makki Al Orfali, was a judge who educated all his children abroad and encouraged their interest in the arts.

Orfali still plays a mean piano, a skill she demonstrates during a tour of her house. She has kept few of her paintings here, most are in private collections.

The artist no longer sells in Baghdad, unable to fetch the thousands her work sells for in the Gulf.

An exhibition in Abu Dhabi this April may be the last before she turns her attention completely to cultural business in her native city.

Israel threatens to annex WB if Palestinians declare state

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli government threatened Thursday to annex most of the West Bank if the Palestinians unilaterally declare an independent state, public radio said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Moshe Arens and Ariel Sharon had decided "to impose Israeli law" on the part of the West Bank remaining

under Israeli control, if the Palestinian National Authority proclaimed a Palestinian state on May 4.

The decision was made during a meeting at the prime minister's office in Jerusalem, the radio said.

Netanyahu had previously mentioned the possibility of annexing more than half of the West Bank if Palestinian President Yasser Arafat

declared a Palestinian state on May 4 when the interim autonomy period under the 1993 Oslo accords expires.

Arafat reiterated his intention on Tuesday while visiting Madrid, to proclaim a Palestinian state on that date. But he said the final decision would be made by the Palestinian administration.

'Egypt to recover stolen antiquities from Jordan'

By Lamia Raddi
Agence France Presse

CAIRO — Egypt said Wednesday it expected to recover more stolen antiquities from Jordan next month after a priceless batch of papyrus, stone engravings and other items were returned from Britain.

"I am very happy because these works are like children returning home," the Secretary General of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) Gaballah Ali Gaballah told reporters.

Gaballah was speaking at a ceremony at the Egyptian Museum in downtown Cairo where the objects recovered last week from Britain were on display.

He did not say, however, if the 50 items — including papyrus, statues, old Coptic

Christian weaving and stone engravings portraying warriors — would go on permanent display in Egyptian museums.

"The papyrus are the most important items because they represent precious documents on the era in which they were written," Culture Minister Farouq Hosni said.

Hosni said the papyrus were written in the ancient form of cursive script known as Demotic 300 years before Christ.

They had been stolen in the early 1990s from Saqqara, the City of the Dead and what used to be Memphis, by a British-led smuggling network and recovered in recent years by Scotland Yard.

British antiquities restorer Jonathan Tokely-Parry was arrested in 1994 and convicted in Britain in 1997 to six

years in prison.

He was also sentenced in absentia in Egypt to 15 years hard labour. Nine Egyptians were also jailed in Egypt for their part in the scam, in which the objects were stolen and then re-sold elsewhere, mainly Britain.

Egypt is expected to recover from Jordan 24 stolen items which had been seized by the authorities there, including 21 statuettes which were traditionally placed next to mummies to protect them, Gaballah said.

"These objects which were illegally taken out of Egypt also include a marble bust dating to the Ptolemaic dynasty 100 years B.C., a small scarab and an amulet representing the God Ptah," Gaballah said.

Religions in the U.S. to unite to remember King Hussein

CHICAGO (U.T.) — In an unprecedented display of unity and hopes for peace, hundreds of Chicagoans will gather Sunday afternoon under a Jewish roof to honour the memory of His Majesty King Hussein.

Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious and community leaders will lead an interfaith service in memory of His Majesty who died on February 7th. The ceremony comes at the close of the Arba'in, the 40-day period of mourning traditionally observed by many Arab communities.

The 90-minute interfaith service will be held on Sunday at Temple Shalom of Chicago, 3480 North Lake Shore Drive and it is open to the public without charge.

Sponsoring organisations include B'nai B'rith; Muslim Voters of America; the Voice of Jordan Arab newspaper; the Fuhais Association; and the Chicago Commission of Human Relations.

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22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film — Panic in Disguise

PRAYER TIMES

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JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

<p>JORDAN VALLEY 14/24</p> <p>Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 25 Aqaba 30. Humidity readings: Amman 20 per cent, Aqaba 29 per cent.</p> <p>Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:</p> <p>Ajloun 05/11 Jerash 08/19 Um Qays 09/19 Madaba 07/17 Petra 08/18 Dead Sea 11/23</p> <p>USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY</p> <p>AMMAN: Dr. Sa'ad Tawfik 4788285 Dr. Wissam Hazyin 4748563 Dr. Omar Yassin 5336221 Dr. Khalid Abdo 4657129</p> <p>AMMAN: Firas Pharmacy 5661912 Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730 Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004 Raka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5336169</p> <p>IRBID: Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh (02)250080 Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360</p> <p>ZARQA: Dr. Salah Saffarini (05)987565 Palestine Pharmacy (05)983562</p> <p>EMERGENCIES</p> <p>Food Control Centre 4637111 Civil Defence Department 5661111 Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341 Civil Defence Emergency 199 Rescue Police 192 462111, 4637777 Fire Brigade 4671021 Blood Bank 4775121 Highway Police 5343402 Traffic Police 4896392 Public Security Dept. 4630321 Hotel Complaints 5605800 Price Complaints 5661176 Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467 Amman Municipality Complaints 7871111 Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121 Overseas Calls 0132 Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101 Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101 Jordan Television 4773111 Radio Jordan 4774111 Water Authority 5680100 J. Electricity Authority 5815615 Electric Power Co. 4636381 RJ Flight Information 44-53200 Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200</p> <p>HOSPITALS</p> <p>AMMAN: The Arab Centre for Heart and Sple-</p>	<p>cial Surgery 5921199 The Islamic, Abdi 5666131/7 Hussein Medical Centre 5856856 Luzmila 4630195 Khaldi Maternity 4644281/6 Alkhalid Maternity 4643441/2 Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362 Malhas, J. Amman 4636140 Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071 Shmeisani Hospital 5607431 Jordan Hospital 5607550 University Hospital 5353444 Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9 Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6 Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3 Al-Bashir 4775111/26 Army, Marka 4891611/15 Queen Alia Hospital 5157100 Amal Hospital 5607155 Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000 Jerusalem Hospital 4387181</p> <p>ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323 Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560 Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731 Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990</p> <p>IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555 Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275 Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02) 7101372, (02) 7103101 Rosary Sisters Hospital (02) 7102831, (02)</p>	<p>7102011 Speciality Hospital (02) 7103100</p> <p>AQABA: Princess Haya Hospi- tal (03)2014111</p> <p>FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT</p> <p>This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Infor- mation on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5</p> <p>ARRIVALS</p> <p>Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights 08:30 Damascus (RJ) 09:30 New Delhi (RJ) 10:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 10:05 Beirut (RJ) 10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ) 10:15 Karachi, Dubai (RJ) 10:35 Colombo (RJ) 11:15 Tehran (RJ) 15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ) 15:55 London (RJ) 16:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 19:55 Frankfurt (RJ)</p> <p>19:55 Rome (RJ) 20:20 Cairo (RJ) 20:40 Berlin (RJ) 22:30 Brussels (add) (RJ) 23:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 00:35 Paris (add) (RJ) 02:00 Larnaca (RJ) 03:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 05:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 07:00 Bangkok, Doha (RJ)</p> <p>Other Flights 13:15 Riyadh (SV) 13:20 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF) 14:30 Milan (AZ) 15:05 Vienna (OS) 18:00 Dubai, Damascus (EK) 18:40 Beirut (ME) 19:05 Paris (AF) 20:30 Frankfurt (LH) 21:35 Cairo (MS) 22:55 London, Damascus (BA) 01:00 Belgrade (JU) 01:15 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)</p> <p>Royal Wings (RW) 08:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW) 08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW) 18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)</p> <p>DEPARTURES</p> <p>Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights 06:30 Beirut (RJ) 10:00 Frankfurt (RJ)</p>	<p>11:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 11:00 Berlin (RJ) 11:30 Rome (RJ) 11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ) 12:00 Brussels (add) (RJ) 12:15 London (RJ) 12:30 Geneva, Paris (RJ) 13:55 Madrid (RJ) 16:30 Cairo (RJ) 18:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 20:15 Bombay (RJ) 22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ) 22:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 22:50 Larnaca (RJ) 23:00 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ) 23:59 Jeddah (add) (RJ) 01:00 Jeddah (RJ) 03:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)</p> <p>Other Flights 06:15 Damascus, London (BA) 06:30 Larnaca (CY) 14:10 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF) 14:45 Riyadh (SV) 15:50 Vienna (OS) 15:50 Milan (AZ) 19:00 Dubai (EK) 20:00 Beirut (ME) 22:35 Cairo (MS) 02:10 Belgrade (JU) 02:15 Amsterdam (KL) 05:50 Damascus, Frankfurt (LH)</p> <p>Royal Wings (RW) 06:00 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW) 08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Air- port) (RW) 19:45 Aqaba (from Marka Air- port) (RW)</p>
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Prince Hassan turns 52

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Prince Hassan turns 52 today.

Prince Hassan was born in Amman on March 20, 1947 to his father Prince (later King) Talal Ben Abdullah and his mother Princess (later Queen) Zein Al Sharaf Bint Jamil. He is the youngest brother of His Majesty the late King Hussein and HRH Prince Mohammad and the older brother of HRH Princess Basma.

Prince Hassan completed his primary education in Jordan, attended Summerfields Preparatory School and later joined Harrow in England. He went on to Christ Church, Oxford, from where he obtained a B.A. (Hons.) in Oriental Studies in 1967. He subsequently completed his M.A. On Aug. 28, 1968,



Prince Hassan married HRH Princess Sarvath, who comes from a distinguished family of the Indian subcontinent. Their Royal Highnesses have four children: Princess Rahma, Princess Sumaya, Princess Badiya and Prince Rashid; and four grandchildren.

U.S. NGOs aid Jordan's enterprises

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — A U.S. non-governmental organisation is trying to help 350 Jordanian small and medium enterprises face stiff competition in world markets, an official has said.

The Jordan-U.S. Business Partnership plans to bolster the performance of the goods and services sector under a four-year programme at an estimated cost of \$15 million through offering technical assistance, according to Lewis Reade, JUSBP president.

"If people in these sectors are going to compete internationally and increase their exports to non-traditional markets, they must be more competitive and improve their productivity and profitability," he told the Jordan Times in an interview on Wednesday.

The programme, operated by the U.S.-based International Executive Service Corps, in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provides technical assistance and consulting services to private sector firms and trade organisations in the developing world.

Reade stressed that the JUSBP, along with USAID and the Industrial Development Directorate, agreed that certain industries will be eligible for possible recruitment.

Technical assistance will be provided to the manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, fresh and processed food for overseas markets sectors, as well as garments and Dead Sea products manufacturers, information technology and health, hotel and education services.

"Educational services could be an export industry in the sense of bringing people from the Gulf and elsewhere to study in Jordan," Reade said.

He said that around 3,000 to 4,000 firms can potentially compete in the international market. However, the JUSBP can reach only 10 per cent of them.

"Companies seeking help have to be established. The JUSBP does not intend to offer assistance to new or bankrupt enterprises," Reade said.

"They have to be majority Jordanian owned. The maximum number of employees for a manufacturing company should not exceed 250, and for a service-oriented company, not

more than 500," he added.

Technical assistance includes business planning, market research, plant layout, licensing and franchising, meeting international quality standards, and raising awareness towards a "Culture of Quality," through industrial extension programmes, computer-based activities and other services.

"The JUSBP's 25 employees, 10 interns, and Jordanian consultants will be working on a regional geographic basis, covering areas in the north and south of the country," Reade said.

"The team will help firms diagnose their problems and how to solve them in a cost-effective way," he added.

The local business climate has been hurt by economic sanctions and low oil prices which have cut exports to Iraq — Jordan's largest market for exports and imports.

Jordanian exports to Iraq reached \$200 million this year, \$55 million less than in 1998. In addition, Jordan has also been frustrated by Israel's reluctance to open up the West Bank market to Jordanian exports, which totalled less than \$25 million last year.

"We want to help companies increase their sales and exports, or to get into exports, increase their profitability and to earn foreign exchange," Reade stressed.

"The idea is to use the private sector as the engine of growth. The government recognises that real growth in employment will come from small and medium-size businesses competing internationally," Reade said.

In a country where one in every five Jordanians lives below the poverty line, unemployment is officially put at 16 per cent and unofficially at up to 27 per cent.

Reade added that the JUSBP is currently studying applications from 50 firms for possible recruitment. The firms vary in size, from a hotel boasting 400 hundred-employees to a woman entrepreneur and employer of four.

"The JUSBP expects 30 per cent of the cost [of technical assistance] to be covered on average over the four-year period," he said. "As for wealthy companies, we expect to recover the whole cost," Reade said.

The payment could be cash or in-kind services, he added.

Peace corps volunteers return to United States

AMMAN (J.T.) — A group of 17 U.S. Peace Corps volunteers ended their service in Jordan and received certificates of merit from U.S. Ambassador William Burns at a special ceremony held at the Dead Sea Movenpick Hotel.

Before banding over the certificates, the ambassador paid tribute to the volunteers' efforts to serve local communities in Jordan and thanked the concerned government ministries and departments for their cooperation with the

volunteers, facilitating their voluntary task over the past two years.

Noting that the corps members had been living with Jordanian families and providing social and humanitarian services to Jordanians mostly in rural areas, the ambassador noted that the corps members have "learned about the life of the good people of Jordan" and that they will convey the image of Jordanian society to their country.

Harvard establishes new programme in honour of King Hussein

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The American Harvard University has established a new programme in honour of His Majesty the late King Hussein at its John F. Kennedy School of Government, Dean Joseph S. Nye, Jr. announced Friday.

In a private meeting with Jordan's newly-crowned monarch, King Abdullah Ben Hussein, during a recent trip to the Middle East, Nye and the King formally established the programme.

The new Kennedy School programme serves to honour King Hussein's leadership of Jordan, his renown and respect as a leader committed to peace and stability in the Middle East, and his unique ability to build bridges and enduring friendships between and among his neighbours in the Middle East and other nations throughout the world.

The programme consists of two components. The first is a permanently endowed professorship named in King Hussein's honour, to promote advanced teaching, research and outreach on issues of global concern and to build bridges among policy-makers, scholars, and business leaders across the world. The second is an ongoing series of King Hussein Fellowships in the school's executive programmes to help train current and future leaders from Jordan to follow his example of service, international diplomacy, and peace.

Nye said, "The Kennedy School is most honoured to

establish a programme honouring one of the twentieth century's most respected and revered leaders. The establishment of this programme is very much in keeping with the Kennedy School's mission to train world leaders and solve global policy challenges, both objectives of which King Hussein was an extraordinary proponent. He served as an inspiration to leaders across the world for his commitment and vision fighting for causes and issues many viewed as intractable. This programme will allow us to train generations of future leaders through his example."

The Kennedy School has enjoyed a long friendship with many leaders from Jordan, having hosted two visits by Her Majesty Queen Noor in the ARCO Forum of Public Affairs.

President Neil Rudenstine joined in expressing his appreciation, stating, "King Hussein's historic reign of 46 years as the ruler of the Hashemite Kingdom, his leadership in transforming Jordan into one of the Middle East's most important and stable nations, and his courage, conviction, and foresight in crossing cultural boundaries as a broker for peace are extraordinary achievements recognised throughout the world. The gathering of international leaders and heads of state at King Hussein's funeral was a testament to the respect and admiration the world shared with the people of Jordan for his life

and legacy. We are pleased and honoured to be able to establish a new programme at Harvard's Kennedy School."

The permanently endowed senior professorship, the King Hussein Ben Talal Professorship of Public Leadership, will allow the school to recruit a world-renowned scholar or distinguished practitioner to conduct research, develop and teach courses, train leaders through degree and executive programmes, and participate in global outreach activities, such as conferences, symposia, colloquia, and other international events.

Parallel to the establishment of the King Hussein Professorship, the Kennedy School will be establishing a fund to make possible substantial Jordanian participation in graduate degree programmes of study, executive training programmes with an international orientation, and new executive programs created for the Arab World in general.

The purpose of these programmes will be to enhance Jordan's human capital as it meets the national, regional and global challenges of the new era.

Through this experience, participants can develop professional skills and interact with international leaders of similar seniority and experience, as well as with distinguished Harvard faculty, before returning to their positions of responsibility in their respective organisations in Jordan.

Bank employees win concession in two-day weekend tug-of-war with Central Bank of Jordan

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — Employees of Jordan's 22 commercial banks appear to have won a concession in their recent tug-of-war with the Central Bank of Jordan over extended daily working hours in return for an extra day off a week, officials said on Friday.

Head of the Jordan Trade Union of Insurance and Auditors Employees (JTUIAE), said the CBJ informed him that it would introduce changes to the system, in place since March 1, after many employees complained it wreaked havoc on their social and family lives.

"Under the promised changes, banks will operate from Sunday to Thursday, from 08:00 a.m. to 15:30 p.m

with no lunch break instead of from 08:30 to 17:00 p.m. with a 30-minute lunch break," Rashid told the Jordan Times. "However, employees will still observe a second day off on Saturday, in addition to Friday (the traditional national weekend)."

The compromise, reached on Thursday after talks with CBJ Governor Ziyad Fariz, bank representatives and other officials, helped cancel Saturday's meeting of the 15,000-strong JTUIAE to oppose the move, including bringing a law suit against the bank.

Most employees condemned the new system under which they were forced to put in three extra working hours a day in exchange for

an extra day off a week. Bank managers say extended working hours will boost the performance of the country's financial sector by enabling longer contact with the outside world.

CBJ governor Ziyad Fariz, who was not available for comment, is expected to announce the changes soon.

Rashid said the expected amendments were in line with the number of weekly working hours set by the Labour Law.

The March 1 changes brought the total number of working hours to a maximum of 42.5 instead of a minimum of 36 hours, prompting most staff to demand financial compensation.

Victims' society organises regional conference

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — A newly-established society to protect victims of domestic violence is organising a regional conference to discuss the issue of violence against females in the region, several founders said Friday.

Mo'men Hadidi, deputy president of the Society for the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence which was registered last month, said the conference aims at exchanging their experience in the field of domestic abuse.

"It will be an opportunity for participants to inform each other of what each country is doing in the field of domestic violence," Hadidi told the Jordan Times.

According to Hadidi, who also heads the National Institute of Forensic Medicine, plans to set up the society developed after many recent workshops on the issue which pointed out the need to focus on women's issues and the elimination of violence against them.

"We felt that we needed to direct all national efforts towards domestic violence by helping the victims and providing them with the necessary help and rehabilitation."

"If we do not pay attention to their needs and provide them with a healthier environment, they will grow up to become criminals," he said.

Hani Jahshan, the society's secretary, said the organisation aims to provide social and psychological help to women who are threatened by their families under the pretence of honour.

"Following up on such cases from the psychological and social level is not enough, and that is why we felt that we needed to help these women," Jahshan said.

Between 25 to 30 women are reportedly killed in Jordan annually for family honour reasons, according to official figures.

Jahshan said the society also plans to establish a guest house for women who are victims of domestic violence and for those whose lives are endangered by family members for their alleged involvement in "immoral behaviour."

Several efforts were initiated on the national level recently to try to help women who are subjected to domestic violence and those whose lives are threatened by their families for "reasons of honour."

The Ministry of Social Development said in February it intends to open a women's shelter.

Presently, over 50 women are forced to spend indefinite periods in the country's correctional facilities, some without any charges, in what is termed as "administrative detention or protective custody."

funds for this shelter, and it might not be a fancy place, but our aim is to help these women who are in need and are looking for support," said lawyer Lubna Duwani, elected president of the society last month.

Duwani, who has been in practice since 1992, said founders decided to set up the society "because we felt that the issue of honour crimes and domestic violence should be discussed in the open, especially that most people are afraid to tackle it."

Jahshan said another aim was to find alternative families for women who could be possible victims of honour killings.

According to Duwani, future plans include expanding the society's membership and conducting several studies on honour killings and documenting these crimes.

Other founders and board members include University of Jordan sociologist Hamdi Sari, Ministry of Administrative Development Secretary General Nancy Bakir, marketing expert Mohammad Abu Rish, a marketing expert and Asma Khader, an attorney and human rights activist.

"We tried to include all the people who are interested or involved in this issue so that we would start from the beginning on solid basis," Duwani said.

Muslim Brotherhood meets King

King orders release of 16 MB members detained on security charges

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Muslim Brotherhood presented to His Majesty King Abdullah its views on the country's overall policies and its outlook in a meeting held on Thursday at the Royal Court.

King Abdullah, during his first private meeting with the Brotherhood leadership since he ascended to the Throne on Feb. 7, expressed appreciation for the social, national, and moral role of the Islamic movement, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Recalling the movement's national stands to ensure the country's stability through the past decades, the King described the Brotherhood as "a basic and main part of the national powers."

Hoping that "all national forces will realise the dangers threatening the nation and obstacles facing it," the King urged "all members of the one Jordanian family to work together... as one team, within the framework of responsible freedom," Petra reported.

During the meeting, the King also ordered the release of 16 members of the movement who were detained in the past three months on security charges.

Muslim Brotherhood overall leader Abdul Majeed Theibat pledged that his movement will continue its traditional stand of support and loyalty to the Hashemite leadership.

Theibat, who declined to give a statement to the Jordan Times on Friday, was quoted earlier by the London-based Al Hayat as praising King Abdullah's stands on inter-Arab relations.

He reportedly described Thursday's meeting, attended by Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and Muslim Brotherhood's executive committee members, as "positive" and said the results of the meeting will materialise soon.

The Brotherhood has maintained that peace with Israel

created imbalance and frustration, which, it said, manifested in a regression of public freedoms, rising unemployment, a skyrocketing crime rate, and social corruption.

The Muslim Brotherhood has been a precious ally of the regime in containing communism and Nasserism during the cold war, but, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, its relations with successive Jordanian governments became tepid.

The Brotherhood has long expressed disappointment and frustration at what it considered the inadequacy of democratic reforms started in 1989. A one-year crisis with the government of then-Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali culminated in a Brotherhood-led boycott of the 1997 general elections.

Close relations with the leadership, however, never cooled, and King Hussein described the Brotherhood as "the backbone" of the state at a rally after the November 1997 elections.

Petra said Theibat reiterated his movement's allegiance to the regime, telling the King during the one-hour meeting: "We are from you, Your Majesty, we are with you, as one team, one body that trusts you as a King and leader for a new era."

The movement, which asked for the meeting last month, submitted a comprehensive memo including its vision, views, on all political issues, with a special emphasis on democratic reforms and greater public freedoms.

Theibat was reported on Friday to have stressed the movement's peaceful approach and its belief that change should take place "gradually."

After pinpointing for the King cases of discrimination against Brotherhood members in the public sector and complaints of "mistreatment,"

Theibat, praising the Royal gesture to free the detainees, said the monarch's approach was "understanding" and his response "positive."

Theibat was quoted as saying discussions touched on the controversial elections and press laws, cited by the Islamists among the main reasons for their boycott of the 1997 general elections.

The Muslim Brotherhood and its political arm, the Islamic Action Front, have long protested that the one-person, one-vote system introduced by temporary legislation in 1993 and endorsed by Parliament in the 1997 elections law, was aimed at reducing their representation in the Lower House.

As for the press law, unanimously criticised by global human rights groups, the Brotherhood has said it was meant to silence the press in its criticism of the 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

Other topics in the meeting between the King and Theibat included the current municipalities law and a draft legislation dealing with Awqaf (religious endowment).

The opposition has criticised the municipalities law for depriving Amman's citizens of the right to elect half their municipality council and their mayor — who are appointed by the government, according to the law.

A draft law on the Awqaf has come under fire from the Brotherhood for "putting all the workers of Islam under the umbrella of the Awqaf Ministry, thus narrowing the scope of their activities and confining their work within rigid government regulations and bureaucracy," a recent Brotherhood statement said.

The Muslim Brotherhood was among the first groups to hail the appointment of now-King Abdullah as Crown Prince, in late January.

D&T immunisation campaign to resume today in schools

By Dana Charkas

AMMAN — Two major vaccination campaigns will begin today, National Immunisation Day, to back up prior polio vaccination campaigns and to complete diphtheria and tetanus vaccinations.

The diphtheria and tetanus vaccinations were interrupted

given over the course of five days beginning today, and the second part will start in one month for a four-days period. The vaccination will be given orally.

The target group is children in the above mentioned age group, regardless of their immunisation status.

"The percentage of chil-

dents, the diphtheria and tetanus vaccination campaign will be a resumption of the campaign interrupted last September.

Officials investigating the incident said at the time that symptoms were the result of high susceptibility to the anti-diphtheria and tetanus serum — symptoms experts said

National Immunisation Day

more than 600 elementary school students complained of high fever, headache, dizziness and nausea following vaccination.

"The NID is recommended by the World Health Organisation as an activity aiming at eradicating polio in the Mediterranean region," Adnan Abbas, Health Ministry secretary general told the Jordan Times on Thursday.

Around 700,000 children in the age group from one day to five years will be vaccinated during this campaign, said Mazen Abdul Majid, director of the Jordan Vaccination Institute.

The two-stage vaccination will have a one-month interval: The first part will be

dren that develop immunity after the polio vaccination is 90 per cent. That means 10 per cent of children do not develop the right amount of anti-bodies in their blood to be immunised against the disease," Abbas said.

"Therefore the importance of this NID is to catch up those 10 per cent of children," he added.

"We bought the serum for the polio vaccination campaign from Italy and it cost around JD150,000," Abdul Majid said.

The vaccination will be conducted for free in Health Ministry centres, at the Royal Medical Services, the Jordan University Hospital, and in schools.

For around 200,000 stu-

The serum then was produced under Canadian licence by a Hungarian company and were donated to Jordan by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The new D&T serum was purchased by the Ministry of Health and produced by the French company Pasteur Merieux, Abdul Majid told the Jordan Times earlier this year.

Meanwhile, media reports said that the bill of around JD8,000 issued by the University of Jordan Hospital for the treatment of students who were admitted to hospitals because of the D&T vaccination side-effects is refused by both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

What's Going On

AMMAN FRANKOPHONE DAYS

- All activities are held at the Greater Amman Municipality.
- SATURDAY MARCH 20**
 - Drawing competition for school students at 4:00 p.m.
 - Performance by Romanian youth choir (Allegretto Romania) at 5:00 p.m.
 - Reception presented by the Greater Amman Municipality marking the start of the Amman Frankophone Days at 6:15 p.m.
- SUNDAY MARCH 21**
 - Lecture by Mme Guedj entitled "Identité de la poésie francophone" at 6:30 p.m.
 - Film entitled "Le français comme on l'aime" at 8:00 p.m.

FILM

- "Extreme Measures" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman, on Sunday March 21 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).

DIALOGUE

- Dialogue with Dr. Osama Ghazali, editor-in-chief of Al Siyash magazine, on "The International Political Changes and Their Impact on the Arab World" at Abdul Hameed Soman Foundation, Jabal Weibdeh, on Wednesday March 24 at 6:30 p.m.

POETRY RECITAL

- Lecture by Lebanese poet Abdou Wazin on his experience in composing poems (to be followed by poetry recitals) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Jabal Weibdeh on Sunday March 21 at 6:00 p.m.

Kosovo talks suspended, Serbia blamed

PARIS (AFP) — Western powers called a halt to faltering Kosovo peace talks Friday, pinning the blame for the collapse on Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and warning that punitive strikes remained an option.

"The negotiations are adjourned," Britain and France, co-chairmen of the talks, said in a statement. "The talks will not resume unless the Serbs express their acceptance of the accords."

It was the second failed attempt in six weeks to wrest a peace deal for the province, where more than 2,200 people have died and 230,000 have been displaced in over a year of fighting between Serbian forces and separatist guerrillas.

"Time is running out and our patience is certainly running out," said U.S. mediator at the talks, Christopher Hill. "NATO stands ready to act and we are reviewing all options."

Amid talk of punitive action against Milosevic, officials of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe said in Pristina that the first of its 1,400 observers were being evacuated from Kosovo.

Germany and Britain meanwhile, ordered citizens out of Yugoslavia.

French President Jacques Chirac pinned "the entire

responsibility" on the talks breakup on Milosevic and said it was now up to NATO chief Javier Solana to assess "in what conditions the consequences must be drawn."

His Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, who co-chaired the talks with British counterpart Robin Cook, confirmed that military strikes against Serbia remained an option.

Asked whether Belgrade's refusal to accept the peace accord for Kosovo meant that European nations and the United States would now consider punitive action, Vedrine said on France Info radio: "That's where we're at."

"The (peace) negotiations have not succeeded. It was agreed at NATO several weeks ago that if we found ourselves in this situation, and unfortunately we've reached this point, there would be consultations between members of the Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia who are also members of NATO, and the NATO secretary general."

During 17 days of talks at Rambouillet outside Paris last month, both sides had refused to sign on to an 82-page interim peace accord without first consulting at home.

But when three weeks later the Paris round opened last Monday, the Kosovo Albanians announced their



Ethnic Albanian negotiators at the Kosovo peace talks. (from left) Veton Surroi, Ibrahim Rugova, Hashim Thaci, sign a draft accord, hammered out last month at Rambouillet chateau, at the International Conference Centre, Avenue Kleber, in Paris, March 18, 1999. The accord calls for self-rule for Kosovo, plus the deployment of a NATO-led peacekeeping force (AFP photo)

agreement and Thursday put pen to paper at an official signing ceremony at the conference centre where the talks took place.

The Serb side meanwhile, swiftly erased hopes of a deal by demanding to rewrite substantial parts of the Rambouillet accord.

"Why would we sign?" Serbian President Milan Milutinovic again insisted Friday after dubbing the accord "a fraud" and "a big deceit."

"The Yugoslav delegation has tried to unravel the Rambouillet accords," Cook and Vedrine said in their statement.

"We will be in contact

with the secretary general of NATO."

But the statement delivered no deadline for Belgrade to approve the peace blueprint offering Kosovo Albanians substantial self-rule under a three-year interim plan that is to be secured by a 26,000-member NATO-led force.

European diplomats insisted, however, that Serbia would be issued a verbal deadline for signature, but it was unclear whether earlier reports of a deadline for next Wednesday had been agreed.

Belgrade will be given "a clear understanding of the

timescale we're talking about," one diplomat said. "Sometimes there's a point to issuing a public deadline, sometimes there isn't."

A Serb source close to the talks said Belgrade was expecting a visit from a top international leader in the next few days for further talks.

Russia, which is opposed to military action without U.N. approval, said that as far as it was concerned the talks were not over.

"Moscow believes that the negotiation process is continuing and there is no alternative to a political resolution to the conflict," chief foreign ministry spokesman

Vladimir Rakhmanin said.

Russia approved most of the statement issued by Cook and Vedrine bar the paragraph referring to NATO, a European diplomat said.

Hoping to ward off any chance of a military flare-up on the ground, the statement issued by the two ministers also said:

"We solemnly warn the authorities in Belgrade against any military offensive on the ground and any impediment to the freedom of movement and of action of the KVM (Kosovo Verification Mission) which would contravene their commitments."

Annan tells NATO it is not above U.N.

BRUSSELS (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has told NATO, as it prepares for possible air strikes against Serbia, that the Atlantic alliance is not above the United Nations.

Annan's message, published in a special brochure produced by NATO for its 50th anniversary, reminds NATO that its "treaty opens with a reaffirmation of their faith in the purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter."

He added that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) undertook to "refrain from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations."

Annan pointed out that Article 1 of the alliance's treaty bound members to "settle any dispute in which they are involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security are not endangered."

"Moreover Article 7, to make quite sure there is no misunderstanding, states that the treaty does not in any way affect either the parties' rights and obligations under the charter of the primary

responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security," Annan said.

He warned that air strikes against Serbia — a sovereign state which has not attacked another state — without the sanction of the U.N. would have serious consequences for international relations, in particular with Russia, Serbia's main international backer.

Even in the case of an attack against one of their members, which under Article 5 of the charter would be treated as an attack against them all, they are still bound "to report immediately to the Security Council any armed attack, as well as measures taken in response to it."

The founding treaty, signed in Washington, also requires NATO to "terminate such measures" when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security," Annan said.

He congratulated NATO on the contribution it had made to regional security in Europe, especially in Bosnia, and expressed the hope that

the alliance, which welcomed Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic to its ranks last week, would act in future in line with its charter.

He said that if the Security Council had to again authorise coercive action in Europe or in North America, it could count on the alliance's competence, experience and resources, which he said were irreplaceable.

NATO is due to discuss the legality of actions undertaken outside its territory — defined as the territory of its member states — when it meets for its 50th anniversary celebrations in Washington at the end of April.

The alliance, which now has 19 members and three of them — the United States, Britain and France — with permanent seats on the U.N. Security Council, will discuss its strategic concept at the Washington meeting.

The European members of the alliance have said that any actions undertaken outside NATO's territorial zone should be sanctioned by the Security Council, while the U.S. has claimed such a measure is not needed.

Prodi emerging as favourite for EU top job

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder flew back to European Union headquarters Friday searching for a solution to the crisis started by the resignation of the entire EU executive commission.

Schröder, the current EU chairman, made a whistle-stop tour urgently seeking agreement among the 15 EU nations on a successor for European commission President Jacques Santer.

Santer and the rest of the 20-member board resigned Tuesday after a scathing report on cronyism and financial irregularities.

Replacement speculation has centred on Italian former Prime Minister Romano Prodi, who some reports have suggested could be named to the job at a two-day summit of EU leaders starting Wednesday in Berlin.

Other names mentioned as permanent or temporary replacements for Santer include Portuguese Premier Antonio Guterres, former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and the outgoing commission Vice President Sir Leon Brittan.

However, EU leaders stressed they have not yet agreed on how or when to replace Santer, let alone on a candidate.

"In the absence of any agreement as to procedure or any general pattern amongst the declared intentions of our partners, it would be premature to consider specific nominees," Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern said in Dublin.

The EU has been thrown into turmoil by the resignation which is unprecedented in the EU's 42-year history.

Permanent replacements to Santer's team cannot be sworn in until after mid-June elections to the European Parliament, which has to vote on new commissioners. Many EU governments' don't want Santer and other commissioners shamed by the mismanagement report to stay on as caretakers that long.

Schröder is set to discuss possible solutions with Santer and Jose Maria Gil-Robles, the president of the European Parliament, which has assumed new stature by instigating the report that brought the commission's downfall.

One idea is for Prodi, or

some other political figure, to take over the commission presidency temporarily with the expectation that he will be reappointed for a full five-year term after the new parliament is elected.

Current commissioners not personally blamed in the report would stay until permanent successors can be sworn in by the new parliament.

But some EU leaders, including Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, want Santer to stay on in a caretaker capacity through June so as not to disrupt key talks on reforming EU finances to prepare for admission of new members from eastern Europe.

Germany has been pushing for the Berlin summit to stay focused on reaching an agreement on those budget reforms, and has hinted another summit could be held soon afterwards to resolve the commission crisis if need be.

"We cannot say if there will be an agreement or a decision in Berlin," Schröder told a news conference Thursday after meeting Aznar in Madrid. "This is an open question."

Bosnian Serb leaders agree to Brcko decision

VIENNA, Austria (AP) — Bosnian Serb representatives agreed Friday to accept an arbitrator's decision over the disputed town of Brcko, ending nearly two weeks of controversy that led to a breakdown in cooperation between the Serb Republic and international officials.

Following discussions in Vienna with U.S. arbitrator Roberts Owen, Milorad Dodik said the Serbs would begin working to implement the Brcko decision. But he demanded they be allowed to work out solutions to controversial measures through cooperation with the Muslim-Croat Federation.

"We must take responsibility and talk over all issues that are of concern to Bosnia-Herzegovina and not let the international

community take all the decisions for us," Dodik said.

He added that a new negotiating team including representatives from both the Serb Republic and the Muslim-Croat Federation would be formed to go over all "pending questions."

Among these are issues of military and civilian movements through Brcko and that refugees currently living in the town won't be forced to leave.

International arbitrators' decision two weeks ago to place Brcko under joint control of Serbs, Muslims and Croats, ended unilateral control enjoyed by the Serbs since 1995. The move prompted the pro-Western Dayton peace agreement, which divided Bosnia into the Serb Republic and Muslim-Croat Federation.

On the same day, Bosnia's top international official, Carlos Westendorp, fired

the republic's hard-line president, Nikola Poplasen, who refused to step down.

The moves unleashed a political crisis and hundreds of Bosnian Serbs to take to the streets in protest.

Friday, Dodik told reporters that his resignation had not been accepted, therefore he is still the prime minister of the Bosnian Serb Republic and that the Bosnian Serb assembly would start cooperating with international officials.

Control of Brcko, a city that straddles a patch of land linking the two main areas under Serb-control, was the last decision left unresolved in the 1995 Dayton peace agreement, which divided Bosnia into the Serb Republic and Muslim-Croat Federation.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Italian government proposes tougher sentences for some crimes

ROME (AP) — Faced with growing crime in Italian cities, the government has proposed legislation that would give more power to police, increase prison terms for theft and make it easier to deploy the army to combat criminals. Under the draft legislation announced by the government Thursday, sentences for apartment thefts would jump from a maximum of two years in prison to six. Bag-snatching would fall under armed robbery and offenders would face up to 10 years in prison. If the victim is a minor or an elderly person, the sentence would be increased by a third. The bill would allow the police to investigate a suspect for three months before notifying a prosecutor. Police currently need permission from prosecutors before opening an inquiry. The army, which is already deployed in Sicily to combat the mafia, could be put on alert and allowed to intervene if murders, thefts or other crimes significantly increased. A series of 12 murders in Milan over the past two months and increasing complaints from shop owners and citizens who have been robbed prompted the government to draft the legislation. Italian news reports Friday said that thefts had increased by 4 per cent in 1998 from the previous year and that armed robberies had increased by 14 per cent. It was not clear when parliament would begin examining the government's proposal.

Scottish village evacuated after fire on chemical tanker

EDINBURGH (AFP) — Police in northwestern Scotland Friday were evacuating the residents of a coastal village after a fire broke out on a freighter carrying 1,750 tonnes of chemicals just offshore. At the end of a five-hour drama in rough seas, a tug dispatched by coastguard rescue services managed to hook up with the ship, which had been drifting just 2.5 nautical miles off the coast at Dunnett. A chemical control unit was standing by the chemical tanker, Multitank Ascania, transporting vinyl acetate. The crew was airlifted to safety after fire broke out in her engine-room off. A police spokesman said the 200 residents of the village of Mey were being evacuated "as a contingency measure," although he stressed that "there is no immediate danger." The coastguard said the fire was under control and that there had been no spillage from the tanker, which was now anchored. Rescue services helicoptered 14 of the 15-member crew to safety at dawn after a distress signal was sent out overnight from the Cyprus-flagged ship. Only the captain had stayed aboard, and he was taken ashore at around 8.30 a.m. "We have chemists working on what problems there could be and how to deal with them," said a coastguard spokesman. "There have been no spillages or injuries reported at this time."

Albanian kills three compatriots before taking own life

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — In a crime of passion, an Albanian man shot and killed two companions, and seriously wounded another before taking his own life Friday, police said. Piro Kjolari, 37, shot Petros Anagnosti, 40, his wife Parakevi, 40, and their daughter Vassiliki, 15, while they were walking in central Athens. Anagnosti and his daughter were both killed, and his wife was critically wounded, police said. A police officer who arrived at the scene saw and pursued Kjolari. After a chase, Kjolari used the same pistol to kill himself. According to police, several months ago Mrs. Anagnosti left her husband and daughter to live with Kjolari. Three weeks ago she broke off the relationship and went back to her husband. The family was on their way to a police station to obtain a restraining order against Kjolari when he shot them. Kjolari had been threatening to kill them if Anagnosti did not return to him, police said.

Trial starts in Tanzania's major ship accident

DAR ES SALAAM (AFP) — The trial in Tanzania of four people accused of criminal negligence and the manslaughter of more than 700 people when a ship sank on Lake Victoria has started, the press said Friday. The MV Bukoba, a passenger ship owned by the Tanzania Railways Corporation (TRC), capsized and sank near the Lake Victoria port of Mwanza in May 1996, drowning more than 700 people. In the dock were the ship's captain, Rume Mwiru, the vessel's inspector Gilbert Mokiwa and two TRC workers, Alphonce Sambo and Prosper Rugumila, all of whom pleaded not guilty when the charges were first read to them last Monday. The privately-owned daily The African reported Friday that the state intended to call 43 witnesses, while the defence will summon six to testify in the case, the biggest ever accident in Tanzanian water transport history. Principal state attorney, William Magoma, who is leading the prosecution team, told the high court in Mwanza Thursday that the state has already drawn its list of witnesses, who would be summoned in court soon. Magoma also told the court that the prosecution would tender 13 exhibits during the trial, which includes contracts between the owners of the ill-fated vessel, the TRC, and the builders of the ship, Belgian Shipping Corporation. Other documents are the certificates of seaworthiness of the ship and technical assessment reports by various experts.

Four suffocate to death in Philippines treasure tunnel

MANILA (AFP) — Four people suffocated to death in an underground tunnel being dug by bounty hunters searching for the loot of Japanese World War II General Tomoyuki Yamashita, a Philippines television station reported Friday. Two treasure hunters were trapped at the bottom of the 18 metre vertical tunnel near the town of Lumban late Thursday. GMA television reported on the scene. Two firemen sent down the shaft to rescue them also perished, and the four bodies have yet to be recovered, the station said, quoting police. The station said the four were apparently asphyxiated by fumes of gasoline, which the treasure hunters had mixed with flour supposedly to loosen the rock at the bottom of the shaft. Yamashita was hanged as a war criminal in the northern Philippines city of Baguio in 1946, two years after the liberation of the Philippines from Japanese occupation forces. But stories of treasures supposedly looted from Southeast Asian countries which were occupied by Japan during the war continue to fascinate generations of treasure hunters half a century later.

World
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World News

India, Pakistan reaffirm commitment to ties

NUWARA ELIYA, Sri Lanka (R) — The foreign ministers of arch-rivals India and Pakistan said Friday they were committed to further cementing relations.

India's Jaswant Singh and Pakistan's Sartaj Aziz, who met on the fringes of a south Asian ministerial meeting in Sri Lanka, said in a joint statement they realised the urgency of the task.

Singh read the statement with Aziz by his side after they had lunch, which followed 20 minutes of informal talks Thursday.

"The statement that we have just issued is the clear demonstration of the direction, movement and moving forward on the Lahore declaration," Singh told reporters.

The countries' prime ministers met in the Pakistani city of Lahore last month and pledged to take steps to reduce the risk of a nuclear conflict and to intensify efforts to resolve their territorial dispute over the Himalayan region of Kashmir.

"The next round of the composite and integrated dialogue process in accordance with the agreed agenda will commence in May 1999 in New Delhi and Islamabad, and will be held over a period of six weeks," the statement said.

The two foreign ministers will meet shortly after the May-June round, the statement added.

"The purpose (of the informal meeting) was to set out a road map on the basis of which we will be able to pursue the implementation of that (declaration)," Aziz said.

When asked if they had discussed Kashmir, regarded by Pakistan as the central focus of the talks, Aziz said: "The composite and integrated dialogue process includes Kashmir."

India and Pakistan last year conducted air-for-air nuclear tests, triggering global fears of a nuclear arms race in the Indian sub-continent and attracting international sanctions.

The two neighbours have fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir, since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

The statement also said the two sides had decided to ease visa restrictions for each other's citizens and that measures for various categories of visitors would be announced shortly.

Officials from the two sides will meet next month to formalise an agreement on the release of civilian prisoners and to discuss other humanitarian issues, the joint statement added.

Singh had said on his way to Sri Lanka that he would also discuss with Aziz an agreement on missile test notification, but the joint statement did not touch on this.



Swiss engineer Jean Piccard (centre), pioneer balloonist with his famous brother Professor Auguste Piccard, starts a night ascent with his sister-in-law, Jeanette Piccard (left), wife of Auguste Piccard, in Detroit 24 May 1934. Bertrand Piccard springs from an illustrious family of adventurers and inventors. Jeanette Piccard was the grandmother of Swiss balloonist Bertrand Piccard who is about to realise a non-stop round-the-world trip onboard the Breitling Orbiter 3 balloon. Auguste Piccard, his grandfather, a well-known physician, was a pioneer in modern aviation and space travel (AFP photo)

Balloon on track to circle globe over Mauritania

GENEVA (R) — Two hot-air balloonists were half-way across the Atlantic Ocean Friday, on track to complete their round-the-world voyage at the weekend, probably Saturday over Mauritania, their flight director said.

Alan Noble said that Bertrand Piccard of Switzerland and Briton Brian Jones would probably bring their towering Breitling Orbiter 3 down in northern Mali, early Sunday.

But they might choose to press on and attempt a landing in Egypt, depending on fuel supplies, he added.

Noble, a British engineer, was speaking hours after the balloon smashed yet another aeronautical record, heating the duration record of 17 days, 18 hours and 25 minutes set two weeks ago by the British-registered craft Cable and Wireless, piloted by Andy Elson and Colin Prescott.

"They heat the absolute world duration record this morning. That means they have flown longer unrefuelled than any other aircraft of any type in history," Noble told Reuters television.

"This is a great record. Only people going around the world in satellites and space ships have flown for longer than these guys," he said in the interview at flight control centre.

At 1230 GMT, the nine-tonne craft was midway over the Atlantic, having caught the jetstream. It was travelling at 151 km per hour and likely to speed up.

"They will cross the finishing line in Mauritania, probably at dusk Saturday," Noble said. "We'll probably have them fly through the night and land them in Mali the next morning (Sunday). I think it will be Mali."

"But if they can conserve a little bit of fuel, we can get an extra night's duration and we will take them on to Egypt."

The new endurance record will have to be ratified by the governing International Aeronautical Federation (FIA) in Lausanne, Switzerland.

FIA inspectors placed sealed altimeters within the capsule which will be analysed after touchdown to verify records.

Monday, the Anglo-Swiss team grabbed the distance record from American adventurer Steve Fossett, who flew 22,910 km in his fourth solo attempt last August.

So far, Piccard and Jones have flown more than 39,586 km since taking off aboard their nine-tonne craft from Chateau d'Oex in western Switzerland on March 1.

Piccard and Jones decided Thursday evening that they had enough fuel to try to cross the Atlantic and reach the "finish line" over Africa.

"There is absolutely only one way to fail in this flight and that would be to quit now. We're both of the opinion, Brian and I, that we seem to have enough fuel to do it in accordance with the weather our specialists have forecast," Piccard, 41, said in a telephone conversation with Noble.

To complete the circumnavigation feat, one of the last aeronautical challenges remaining as the century draws to a close, they must cross the ninth degree west longitude.

The landing site has not been set, as it will depend on the supply of liquid propane fuel left when they cross the line.

Jones, a 51-year-old former British Air Force pilot and grandfather, has spoken of his dream of landing near the pyramids in Egypt.

"The best scenario is to have enough fuel to carry on and stay in the jetstream and go to Egypt," Noble said. "Quite frankly, that makes our lives a little bit easier in going to pick them up."

"If they land in Mali or Mauritania, the infrastructure there is not brilliant. We're having trouble finding heli-

Anti-Japanese protests greet Japanese premier in South Korea

SEOUL (AFP) — Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi Friday began a tough state visit to South Korea aimed at reconciling the allies' policies on Communist North Korea and banishing old animosities.

But the first visit here by a Japanese premier in five years got off to a hostile start, with hundreds of students and anti-Japanese activists protesting, forcing police to throw a tight security blanket across Seoul.

Around 200 Korea University students hurled a coffin draped in the Japanese flag, denouncing the visit and a recent Seoul-Tokyo fisheries accord.

"We oppose Obuchi's trip to Korea," they chanted. "Japan is a wartime aggressor."

Students at Korea University, where Obuchi will lecture on the second day of his three-day visit, have vowed to hold more rallies Saturday unless he offers a "sincere apology" for Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule here.

More than 100 demonstrators in several spots across Seoul also protested the visit, which follows President Kim Dae-jung's landmark trip to Tokyo in October during which Japan apologised for the occupation.

Some demonstrators marched to the Japanese embassy to submit a letter protesting the visit, intended to bolster political, economic and security ties.

South Korean Prime Minister Kim Jong-Pil held a dinner for Obuchi, saying he hoped for a visit by Japanese Emperor Akihito.

"I hope we can work towards establishing a visit in the near future," Kim said.

While officials hope the trip will reinforce the long-troubled relations, it has also stirred bitter feelings among many South Koreans.

Security around the Japanese embassy and across the city was bolstered, with thousands of riot police deployed to ward off trouble.

Anti-Japanese forces including surviving "comfort women" who were forced into prostitution in frontline Imperial Army brothels during World War II, had also rejected Japan's reconciliation gestures so far.

An association of Koreans drafted into the Imperial Army as soldiers and civilian employees called on President Kim to demand compensation from Japan.

"Imperial Japan commandeered Korean youths through force and drove them into the jaws of death," they said in a letter.

But despite the wave of protests, the focus of Obuchi's visit will be how to deal with starving North Korea and its nuclear and missile threat.

Seoul has signalled it wants Tokyo to agree to ease its stance towards North Korea and to pursue normalisation in line with Kim's bold "Sunshine Policy" of peaceful engagement.

"During Prime Minister Obuchi's visit, I expect that we will be able to reach a conclusion that South Korea, the United States and Japan agree on a unified policy towards North Korea," Kim told reporters.

North Korea and the United States this week reached a deal under which Pyongyang agreed to allow

U.S. access to a suspected underground nuclear site in return for food aid.

Japan, while welcoming the deal, has remained wary of the unpredictable Sialist regime.

But Obuchi Friday appeared keen to downplay any differences. "It is important to confirm there is no conflict of opinions between me and President Kim Dae-jung," he said, before leaving Tokyo.

He told Jiji Press Japan would opt for the comprehensive approach.

North Korea late Friday blasted Japan, saying it was "ridiculous for Japan to talk about peace diplomacy. Impudently enough, Japan is crying that it is necessary to adopt hills on economic sanction in view of threats by the North and reflect them in its policy."

"Threats to the Korean peninsula and its vicinity come from the reckless military moves of the U.S. and Japanese reactionaries and the South Korean authorities to stifle DPRK," the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

Japan and North Korea have no diplomatic ties and Tokyo imposed sanctions after the North launched a rocket over Japan last August.

Other issues on the agenda for Saturday's summit include a likely call by Kim for Japan to take steps to stabilise its weakening currency and help other Asian nations overcome their economic crisis.

Obuchi said he would propose a "Japan-South Korea Economic Agenda 21" adding that the summit agenda would include moves for an early conclusion of a bilateral investment protection treaty.

Ethnic fighting subsides in Indonesia, but death toll rises

SINGKAWANG, Indonesia (AP) — Vastly outnumbered Indonesian security forces patrolled burned-out villages in Borneo Friday, the death toll from three days of ethnic fighting rose to at least 64, and thousands of people fled their homes.

Using a shoot-to-kill order, police and soldiers forced hundreds of rioters armed with knives and swords to return to their homes late Thursday, leaving behind bodies in the streets, including at least one that had been beheaded, officials said.

Hundreds of houses were set on fire and burned to the ground in the fighting, which began Tuesday.

By Friday morning, shops were reopening in some villages, but witnesses said that only happened after all members of the outnumbered Madurese ethnic group had fled. And tensions appeared to remain high in many areas as nightfall approached.

The fighting on Borneo, a large island in central Indonesia, involved indigenous Malay, Bugis, Dayak as well as ethnic Chinese people on one side and the Madurese immigrants on the other. The Madurese were resettled by the government to reduce overcrowding elsewhere.

The remote region has been known for violence between communities for years.

The unrest is the latest outbreak of fighting among ethnic and religious groups in Indonesia, which is coping with one of its worst economic and political crises ever.

Many people fear violence could escalate across the world's fourth most populous nation as it prepares to hold its most open parliamentary election in 45 years on June 7.

The ballot is regarded as crucial to a democratic process that began when authoritarian President Suharto quit in May amid riots and protests against his 32-year rule.

Smoke still rose Friday from some burning villages on Borneo, and a police officer in Tebas, one of the hardest-hit areas, said some people tried to attack boats and trucks taking Madurese to safety.

"Yesterday we buried 10 bodies," the officer said on condition of anonymity. He predicted that the death toll would rise once his forces were able to reach the remotest villages.

Maj. Gen. Zaeouri Hasyim, the regional military chief, said the death toll was at least 64 and that 13,600 people, mostly Madurese, were left homeless.

Antara said that sporadic ethnic fighting actually began in the region nearly a month ago, killing about 15 people before the widespread rioting exploded this week.

Col. Chaerul Rasjid, a regional police chief, said he hopes the region doesn't turn as violent as Maluku islands to eastern Indonesia did. More than 200 people died there in clashes between Christians and Muslims that started in January and only recently began to subside.

The fighting is not far from Indonesia's land border with Malaysia and 700 kilometres northeast of Jakarta.

Rasjid said police spent Thursday night negotiating with community leaders in an effort to reduce tensions.

He said 1,000 police and 1,800 soldiers were patrolling the area and had detained 12 people and confiscated 130 swords and three dozen homemade guns. Rasjid also said a battalion of 900 special police were on standby in Jakarta, the nation's capital.

Despite that, he said, the local people still outnumbered his men by 2,000 to 1, and "that's a big problem for us."



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Legitimate questions

CIVILIAN FLIGHTS carrying Iraqi pilgrims to Saudi Arabia raise legitimate legal questions under U.N. Security Council resolution 670. Baghdad, we are told, acted in defiance of the Security Council sanctions regime by flying its pilgrims on one of its civilian planes. On closer look resolution 670 is open for interpretation, including one reading that it does not prevent Iraq from flying its civilian aircraft from and to the country. What lends support to the proposition that the sanctions applied against Iraq do not necessarily include a prohibition on civilian flights was the inability of the U.N. Sanctions Committee this week to take a clear-cut position on the request by Riyadh for instructions on how to deal with these flights. Riyadh was even reported contemplating seizing the Iraqi plane carrying Iraqis travelling to Mecca to perform their religious duties and sought international guidance on how to deal with that issue.

Neither Washington nor London, the prime enforcers of the sanctions against Iraq, have adopted a clear policy on Iraqi civilian flights at least for the purpose of the Haj season. In retrospect, restrictions on civilian flights into and out of Iraq does not seem to serve any military purpose. All flights heading for Iraq can still be subjected to meticulous inspections to make sure they are not carrying any contraband goods as far as the Security Council is concerned. Accordingly, a sensible reading of resolution 670 would not preclude civilian flights. The fact that Iraq has yielded to international pressure to suspend its civilian flights until now does not make that pressure legal or warranted.

True, Security Council resolution 661 purports to apply restrictions on Iraq's commercial and financial dealings, but even such restrictions need not mean a halt to civilian flights into the Arab country. Now that the Iraqi authorities have decided to force the issue, it is high time that the Security Council adopt a more coherent and reasonable stance on this subject. The Iraqi people have suffered enough already and by making their travel impossible, the international community would be serving no purpose except to add to the Iraqi people's agonies.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Laila Hmoud said water is the most important issue today and every citizen must be aware of and responsible enough to find a solution for the problem mainly caused by the drought, which has affected underground and artesian wells. It is not enough to ration householders' water consumption, especially if the drought continues, the government itself must ration water supplies and search for resources underground and not relinquish the Kingdom's water share of the Yarmouk and Jordan rivers, added Hmoud. Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel to secure its water rights, which were lost to the Jewish state after the 1967 war, she said and added that peace from an Israeli point of view is something that only benefits Israelis. The Israelis are now backing down on the water commitments stipulated in the peace deal, claiming that drought forces them to do so, the writer argued. The Jewish state is not used to commit itself to agreements it has signed, as it believes they are annual and made just to meet Israeli needs, said Hmoud.

Al Dustour's Nazih Qsous said Water Authority regulations stipulate that all water resources in the Kingdom are owned by the state and cannot be used except within the framework of this law. Also the law states that no one is allowed to sell, give or transfer these resources unless a written permission is obtained, added Qsous. Although, the law is very clear, all past governments have failed to deal with water abuse such as the unlicensed drilling of artesian wells, said the writer, adding that everybody knows that there are hundreds of such wells. According to Qsous, hundreds of farms and houses consume great amounts of drinking water for free either because these places don't have water meters or the metres are broken. The former water minister admitted this fact and was working on legalising such situations, said the writer, and since the new government is "enthusiastic" about the water situation, it must issue nationalise all artesian wells without exception and regardless of the owners, argued the writer adding that it also must launch a campaign to monitor farms and houses, and set high penalties against future violators.

United we may succeed

Jordanian Perspective



Dr. Musa Keilani

First Kibla of Islam would be well off remembering that the fate of the Holy City cannot be left alone to negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. By definition, the Palestinians are the weaker of the two negotiating sides, and it is only fair to assume that we cannot expect a just settlement of the issue to emerge from the negotiations. Israel will use everything in its power, including linking any of or all other aspects of the peace process, to pressure the Palestinians into accepting the Israeli version of the status of

Jerusalem. Indeed, an Islamic position is emerging over the status of Jerusalem, but that is not enough to strengthen the Palestinians in negotiations with the Israelis. The Palestinians need to have the strength and capability of every Muslim behind them to succeed in convincing the Israelis that without a proper and fair settlement of the dispute over Jerusalem there will never be peace in the Middle East the way Netanyahu would like to have it. The Palestinians are nowhere near securing that kind of Muslim backing. Until they do, there is very little anyone can do except condemn the Israeli position on Jerusalem, and when the time comes and if the situation remains unchanged, the Holy City will be lost to Muslims.

The Muslim mission to liberate Jerusalem from Israeli clutches should have started years ago. But it is not too late today. A general outline of action was shaped by our late King Hussein, and the Muslim World would be better off to pick up from what King Hussein advocated to ensure the return of Jerusalem to the Islamic fold.

IT IS hard to imagine Ariel Sharon, the hawkish Israeli politician who is now his country's foreign minister, cracking jokes. But that is what he appeared to be doing when he reiterated his country's rejection of the 1947 United Nations Security Council resolution which designated Jerusalem as an international city.

Sharon's comments were funny because no one is talking about Resolution 181 anymore in the context of Jerusalem. The international community has come to tacitly approve the Israeli claim of sovereignty to the western half of Jerusalem which was seized with the help of the departing British forces, even though that part of the Holy City was part of the "international city" called by Resolution 181. We, in Jordan, publicly reaffirmed our recognition of West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel when the late King Hussein flew there in November 1995 to attend the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin.

Having extended that recognition, it would only be naive on the part of the Arabs and the rest of the world to expect Israel to turn back the clock to Resolution 181.

But then, the tacit but unspoken acceptance by many countries that West Jerusalem is Israel's capital is contingent upon Israel relinquishing its claim to Arab East Jerusalem which it seized in the 1967 war. And that is where the issue takes a new turn.

In whatever terms one wants to put it, the bargaining chips on the table are clear: As far as Arabs, Muslims and a large part of the international community are concerned, Arab East Jerusalem belongs to the Palestinians, and Israel's physical control over the city does not mean sovereignty. The city is occupied territory subject to negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians under the provisions of the Oslo accords.

Sharon must be joking, because he seems to think that Israel could get away with legitimising its occupation of Arab East Jerusalem through stalling tactics and deception, in the same way it has in implementing the Oslo accords. He does not seem to give any thought to the importance that the Muslim and Christian worlds attach to East Jerusalem. Israel's rejection of U.N. resolutions and defiance therein of the will of the

international community are well-known, and, because of the strong protective umbrella provided by the U.S., the world has been largely unable to adopt counter-action.

Today, we are hearing more and more Israeli politicians talking about "preserving Jerusalem as the undivided, eternal capital" of the state. We know that this is part electioneering, but, beyond that, many Israeli politicians appear to be convinced that they can continue to ward off pressure to see reason over Jerusalem.

When it comes to Jerusalem, regardless of what has been said and done, Israel cannot simply hope to get away with talking tough and adopting stubborn positions. The entire Muslim World stands behind Arab rights to the Holy City. At least that is what is widely accepted. But what that position needs is a proper initiative so that it can be translated into effective action that will convince the Israelis that their ambitions to legitimise their occupation of the Holy City are pipe-dreams.

Those Muslims who profess attachment to Jerusalem as the

Corruption or deserved liberties

Out of Order



Brian Brown

POWERFUL? BORING? Corrupt? Then you may become the next victim of the recent wave of transparency sweeping the globe. Last week, the entire executive of the European Union, the European Commission, was forced to resign following the release of a damning report accusing the commissioners of fraud, mismanagement and nepotism. The following day, Ariel Deri, the leader of the Shas party and a powerbroker in the Israeli political arena, was convicted of accepting bribes and fraud while he was an official at the interior ministry. And these examples could be just the tip of the iceberg if citizens around the world continue, or begin, raising their voices and demanding that their representatives in government conduct business in a transparent manner and be held accountable for unethical behaviour. Millions of political heads are set to roll.

People, it seems, are becoming less willing to tolerate back-room deals and blatant favouritism simply because the perpetrators are high-ranking officials or government figures. Take Edith Cresson, research commissioner and ex-French prime minister, for example. One of the "irregularities" she was accused of in the EU fraud report was appointing a friend, her dentist, to a responsible position for which he wasn't even remotely qualified. Of course, the position was not one of those crucial offices with the power of life and death over millions of people; it was not as bad, say, as putting a chimp in control of a country's nuclear forces. Cresson's act was merely one of those deals only too common in the political sphere, appointing a crony to a position that will enable him or her to access wealth and power without any of the headaches that come along with actual responsibility.

Average citizens are also becoming increasingly adverse to seeing hard-earned income paid to governments in the form of taxes being used to pamper officials and fund their own private projects. This is where the case of Deri comes in. One of the crimes he was convicted of involved channelling, or more to the point, embezzling, state funds to bail out religious institutes and business interests controlled by him and several associates. Since I'm an American taxpayer, and since the U.S.

government gives billions of dollars to Israel each year, Deri's crime angers me doubly. First, valuable tax dollars which could be abused by American politicians are being abused by Israeli politicians. Second, the embezzled funds went to support religious causes, thus putting the U.S. government in a role that subsidises a religion, which is illegal in the U.S. Governments are estranging themselves from their publics by living off the fat of the land and misusing public funds intended for social projects when many people are finding it increasingly difficult to survive, much less live high.

Citizens know when they are being fleeced, and a number of would-be corruption busters have offered ideas on how to stem unethical spending practices by persons in high places. Perhaps the most memorable was proposed by political activist and philosopher Jello Biafra during his campaign for mayor of San Francisco. One key plank in his platform involved, as Biafra put it, bringing corruption out of the smoke-filled back rooms and instead auctioning off official positions in public arenas so that citizens would know the people who really managed things. Other Biafra proposals, such as making police run for reelection in the neighbourhoods they patrolled, were intended to weed out corruption at the grassroots level. Of course, these suggestions are difficult for most average people to take seriously, but they could be used as springboards for more pragmatic actions.

The driving force behind this increasingly powerful trend of transparency and accountability is being fuelled, I think, by an expanding dialogue on democracy and political participation. People, no matter the circumstances, no matter even if they live in undemocratic countries, are beginning to believe in these principles and in having a say in their futures. This, of course, is commendable to a certain point, but let's be realistic. Would it do for any government to have millions of voices questioning their day-to-day affairs, demanding fairness, justice and the occasional dose of the bitter medicine of accountability? Transparency in the financial matters of individual officials, preventing excesses and the like are all well and good, but would it benefit any

country to open its books to sceptical eyes and justify those hidden, questionable expenses? Of course not.

Naturally, the can of worms of democratic principles has been opened and it's not possible, let alone feasible, for them to be put back in. The best thing to do, I think, is to combine the concept of "democracy" with what some would call "corruption," but most right-thinking individuals would instead term "good" or "strong" government. Admittedly, there are excesses, but I feel that the average citizen in most countries would agree that the essential power structure is sound. Unless serious steps are taken now to restore the reputation of authority, these commendable acts of removing questionable officials could eventually degenerate into a witch hunt that would force out those competent individuals who, though not corrupt, take certain, deserved liberties with their hard-earned positions. And I don't think most people are ready for the end of government as we know it.

RECOMMENDED READING: *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupery. The opening scene of *The Little Prince* takes place in the Sahara Desert, the site of a crash-landing in the 1940s by Saint-Exupery, a French pilot (who was later killed in another crash in the Mediterranean - the guy didn't have much luck with planes). The narrator meets, well, a little prince, who recounts his amazing journey from his home planet to Earth. Though often regarded as a children's classic, *The Little Prince* offers entertainment and a few good words for everyone.

Postpone, repeal and expose

Columnists last week focused their attention on the long-awaited proclamation of an independent Palestinian state and criticised the recently enforced two-day weekend. There was criticism of fundamentalists taking advantage of Islam.

Compiled by
Mohammad Ben Hussein

Al Arab Al Yawm's Mohammad Jumeidi questioned whether Palestinian President Yasser Arafat would declare an independent Palestinian state on May 4 when the interim period for Palestinian autonomy expires according to the Oslo agreement. He said Arafat might postpone the declaration of the state under United States and Israeli pressure. Arafat might be forced to delay the step in order not to contribute to bringing the hard-liner Netanyahu back into office. However, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said the declaration of the state could be postponed for "some time" for "technical reasons." But a postponement could last a very long time, said the writer. The writer charged that Egypt wants to postpone the proclamation of an

independent state because it

wants to avoid a confrontation with the U.S. with which it has shared interests. He said Egypt does not want a political crisis, because it cannot support Arafat in his aim and maintain U.S. support at the same time. Yet Egypt cannot tell the Palestinian National Authority openly to postpone the declaration because its decision will affect the rest of the Arab countries which will follow Egypt. Any initiative Egypt takes, whether to support the birth of the Palestinian state, or oppose it, will be a service to Arab regimes, which Egypt does not want to give, charged the writer. He expected that Arab countries will follow Egypt's lead either way.

Al Aswaq's Rashid Hassan called on the Central Bank to annul the two day weekend which drew widespread protests from people working in the banking sector. He argued that Prime Minister Abdur-Rauf S.

Rawadeh had signalled his gov-

ernment's opposition to the holidays when he stated that the weekend issue was not top of his agenda. The Friday/Saturday weekend has created confusion, charged Hassan, and is no longer the same for all sectors: schools have its holidays on Thursdays and Fridays, banks have its holidays on Fridays and Saturdays, while the rest of the country's departments take off on Fridays, he said. The new system is exhausting and inhuman as working mothers are away from their homes from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Children, in this case, will spend most of the day with maids or the neighbours causing unreparable physiological damage and creating hostility, which will accompany them for the rest of their lives, said the writer. The writer supported the Banking Union in their demands to cancel the two-day weekend after the past few days have proved that such a system is impractical and harmful.

Al Ra'i's Saleh Qallah charged that Abu Hamza Al Masri and Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman do not represent Islam and should be exposed to the rest of the world as criminals. Anybody who watches Abdul Rahman appearing on TV as a symbol to Islam would feel responsible to defend Islam from those who are tarnishing Islam's reputation worldwide. The writer charged that such extremists were planted by the West in Afghanistan in order to eject the former Soviet Union from Afghanistan. After the Soviet Union collapsed the U.S. along with other Western powers took advantage of these figures in order to fight Islam, said the writer. What proves these claims, argued Odwan, is that Al Masri was granted a British citizenship for his role in fighting the Soviet Union while Abdul Rahman was granted asylum in the U.S. on that base as well. The writer called on the Islamic World to expose these people. Islam is targeted, said the writer, and the appearance of Masri or Abdul Rahman on TV screens is no less worse than the crusaders.

Letters to the editor

Letters of condolence

YOUR MAJESTY King Abdullah

TODAY, ON Rotary's 93rd anniversary, I relay greetings on behalf of the Rotary clubs of Jordan, of Rotary International District 2450, which includes clubs in Bahrain, Egypt, Cyprus, Lebanon, Jordan and the Sudan — and indeed the more than 1.2 million Rotarians in over 190 lands around the world.

With our prayers for the soul of your father, we extend our sympathy on your personal loss and our wishes for your success as you take up the challenging task of leading the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

It was in 1955, early in the extraordinary reign of His Majesty King Hussein Ben Talal, that Jordan's first Rotary club was formed in Amman. There are many parallels between Rotary's work and the legacy left by His Majesty King Hussein. Just as Rotary works to further international understanding and peace, so too did King Hussein work to build a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. His lifelong efforts to enhance the quality of life of his people brought them economic stability, greater access to water and electricity, higher literacy and lower infant mortality. As a volunteer organisation dedicated to improving the quality of life for all people, Rotary found in your father an important ally. Indeed, Rotary worked with the Noor Al Hussein Foundation on several projects such as improving the lives of village women at Sweileh and assisting handicapped children.

On several occasions, His Majesty acknowledged that Rotary's objectives paralleled his own, particularly in his gracious support of the Rotary International district conferences held in Amman in 1989 and 1997. It is this special friendship that makes his loss so keenly felt by the Rotary world.

Please know that as you work to preserve and expand your father's vision for your nation and for the Middle East, Rotary remains an important resource for humanitarian initiatives. We wish for you the courage and wisdom to maintain a magnificent legacy.

James L. Lacy
President of Rotary International

ON HEARING about the demise of our beloved King Hussein, our eyes as well as everybody else's grew dim and our hearts began to palpitate. The news was so shocking that I lost my wits for some time.

The news came like a bombshell to me. This is an irreparable loss indeed. His Majesty's death has left a vacuum in the family. When I saw the King last year, he looked quite hearty.

This moment of grief is really unbearable. Jordanians, as well as the world as a whole, have been robbed of one of the most precious jewels.

We must accept this, for it is a stage in the life of man, wherein each and everyone is helpless because sooner or later everybody has to die.

I send my heartfelt sympathies to Her Majesty Queen Noor, His Majesty King Abdullah Ben Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hamzah, HRH Princess Basma and the rest of the Royal family in this hour of sorrow. I pray to Allah, the Almighty, to grant eternal peace to the departed soul.

Hassan and Yusuf Skoien (Norway)
Grade 7

Rawdat Al Ma'aref Schools and Colleges
Amman
Jordan

Keeping Jordan beautiful
— the easy way

MABRUK! They did it again. The ingenious fiends of Earth in their everlasting quest of the destruction of Nature have found yet another means of doing it. Broken glass, plastic bags and all the other rubbish were not enough. By depositing along the road to the Dead Sea lorry-loads of rubble from construction sites, they not only get rid of these wastes in a cheap way, no, they also contribute in a big way to the beautification of the landscape!

Does nobody care for this country? Where are the authorities to stop such sacrileges? Where is the cleanliness everybody is bragging about? (It actually ends after everybody).

Keep on like this and you will soon succeed in destroying one of the few assets of Jordan: the beauty of its Nature.

Ernst Karl Eichen
Amman
e-mail: eichen@index.com.jo

Do not underestimate the power of Sony

By Charles Arthur
and Andrew Gumbel

ONCE UPON a time, the Sony Corporation took a good American invention, the transistor, and turned it into the cornerstone of a worldwide electronics empire. That was in the 1950s, when the company then led by the legendary Akio Morita was in its infancy. Ever since, the Japanese giant has retained the same guiding principle: Drink from the cultural and technological well-springs of the modern world, in an ever-broadening search for global primacy.

While many of its rivals have seen those springs run dry, Sony this week announced a plan whose span is both global and pervasive, reaching down to the uniest household item. Simply, Sony's futurologists reckon that there is no escaping the digital world, where everything will have a chip in it; so they want to provide the software that lets those chips talk to the outside world, and in the process oust the software giant Microsoft from the consumer world.

You might not think that Sony is really like that. For most people, the brand arouses a few strong images: Hits like the Walkman and misses such as the Betamax video in the 1970s (a better technology than VHS, but badly marketed). But the executives in Sony headquarters in Tokyo today run a worldwide conglomerate that encompasses not just electronics and hi-fi equipment, but has branched out into computers, the Internet, the music business and entertainment, including such prestige holdings as CBS Records and the Hollywood studio Columbia Pictures.

Knowing only that much would make the company's latest announcements puzzling. Sony has just recorded its highest-ever quarterly earnings, with group net profit for the last three months of 1998 totalling \$878m. Yet simultaneously, the corporation announced a massive restructuring which would slash its global workforce over the next three years, shedding 17,000 jobs and closing 15 of its 70 factories. It is not yet clear where the cuts will come; 4,500 jobs are at risk in Wales, for example.

But the hints are there in the formal announcement: The headcount will fall by 10 per cent "by...retraining and reallocating employees from analogue to digital businesses, and from hardware to software operations." If you work for Sony assembling analogue TVs, be worried; if you are a programmer developing its Aperiop operating system, be happy, for the future belongs to you.

The need for this radical reworking of the corporation's thinking has been prompted by its baphazard success in capturing a place in the popular imagination. We all know what a Sony Walkman is, and we are increasingly accustomed to the plug-in video game possibilities of the PlayStation — which alone accounts for more than a quarter of current corporate profits. But is the MiniDisc (launched at the start of this decade) a flop or not?

Questions like that have troubled Sony since 1995, when Nobuyuki Idei was appointed its chief executive and had a Damascus revelation during a company briefing after Akio Morita's death. Peter Sealey, a consultant, was explaining the importance of the Internet, which Sony had until then

ignored; they were not even Sony brand-name PCs. Then Sealey pointed out that the value of PC sales in the U.S. in 1994 had for the first time been greater than for TVs.

"He stopped the meeting and challenged my data," Sealey recalled. "I think it was a shock to him that this had happened."

Sony was already reeling from separate cultural shocks during its previous attempts to infiltrate the old, analogue world of music and films. In the late 1980s, Sony's acquisition of CBS Records and Columbia Studios was seen in some quarters as the beginning of a Japanese invasion of all that Americans hold nearest and dearest. While Sony bought out the Columbia name from Coca-Cola, its rival Matsushita, manufacturer of the Panasonic brand, snapped up MCA, the entertainment behemoth that included its own formidable music division as well as another historic Hollywood studio, Universal. The acquisition of prime American brand names by Japanese corporations led to racist mutterings about Pearl Harbour all over again.

However, the West Coast was not going to be bought so easily. Hollywood in particular had followed its own crazy, profligate logic for so long that probably no outsider could have penetrated and reorganised it with any success. Matsushita became so alarmed by the millions demanded by Universal and MCA that it bailed out after five years, selling the property on to the Canadian liquor conglomerate Seagram.

Sony, by contrast, took a long, relaxed view of its participation in the entertainment industry — and almost

got taken to the cleaners as a result. It paid \$5bn for Columbia Studios, an amount industry insiders deemed grossly inflated. The men it chose to run studios, Peter Guber and Jon Peters, were very good at spending money, but apparently not at many other aspects of their job.

Peters, who built his career in Hollywood as a hairdresser who'd dated Barbra Streisand, played the mogul for all he was worth. He hired a clutch of ex-wives and girlfriends as producers on six-figure salaries, persuaded the Sony chiefs to buy a fleet of private jets to fly actors and directors around the world, and built a luxurious ranch in the Colorado mountains expressly to entertain celebrities at weekends. When he was fired in 1993, it was without a single producing credit to his name.

Guber, meanwhile, ploughed the company into one expensive flop after another — Bruce Willis's misadventure Hudson Hawk, Steven Spielberg's Hook, and — worst of all — the costly Arnold Schwarzenegger flop The Last Action Hero. Sony finally stopped the rot in 1994, but was forced to write down a loss of \$3.2bn for the debacle.

The music division, at least, has developed acts who have gone from strength to strength, such as grunge group Pearl Jam, rap stars the Fugees and the phenomenally successful Fugees singer Lauryn Hill. Sony has also made a superstar of Celine Dion, and of Mariah Carey — who also happened to be the wife of Tommy Morita, president of Sony Music.

Problems remain in both music and film (last year's Godzilla was another flop); but Sony recognises their

importance as "software" — that is, something you can render in digital bits. The real profit lies in making "software," not hardware; and especially in being digital, not analogue.

Sony's digital future began in 1982 with the compact disc. It was the piece of consumer electronics which took something previously delivered in "analogue" form — as a continuous wave — and made it digital, sampled into a stream of bits to be reconstituted later. Today, every time you buy a CD, Sony gets a tiny fraction of the price. But the CD was just the start.

What next? Look at everything that presently happens in analogue form, imagine it in digital form, and — if you are Sony — see how you can interpose yourself. TV? To get your present TV to show the digital channels you need a set-top box. Interactive fridges connected to the Internet? Certainly: They are already on sale. "Web phones" able to download data from the Web and act like hand-held computers, but without crashing? Sony is readying one. And it is here that Sony hopes to overtake Microsoft. Controlling those gadgets entails software which can deal with a stream of digital "bits," analyse them and act accordingly. If you are a Web phone and you are sent a film clip, you should send it to the digital TV; if you receive a shopping list you should compare it with the fridge's contents.

Microsoft's problem is that none of its operating systems are designed to cope with those sorts of "real time" problems. PCs appear to sort data quickly but, in fact, data is dealt with in strict order; that which needs processing urgently — such as the next frame of a film — has to wait for the

central chip's attention behind less important matters, such as whether you have pressed a key. Even Windows CE, the "cut down" version of Windows for hand-held devices, is not designed for real-time operation. By contrast, Sony's Aperiop operating system is designed to deal with real-time problems. So why not replace Microsoft? After all, who — apart from Bill Gates — says that you need to have a PC in the midst of all the data swapping going on? Why can't your digital camcorder just connect to your Web phone, to upload a new film to your Web page?

Sealey says that that is the intention: but it is not one which Idei is going to stand up and announce. Publicly, Sony and Microsoft are cooperating on many projects for the digital future, such as Web phones. Privately, Sony wants it all.

Sealey calls Sony's interplay with Microsoft "fearful and respectful and wary." But bear in mind that Sony has often been late into a sector — such as games consoles, or PCs — and then dominated it, with the PlayStation and the Vaio laptop. It could happen as the world goes digital. In that case, yet another chunk off America's West Coast (this time, the Redmond offices of Microsoft) would have to testify to the power of Sony's ideas. As the advertisement said when the games console was first released, "Never underestimate the power of PlayStation." Replace the last word with "digital integration" and you might not have such a snappy phrase — but you could be seeing a future that has Sony written all over it.

— The Independent

'Brand Dubai' open for big business at shopping festival

By Barry Parker
Agence France Presse

THE "SHOP-until-you-drop" philosophy is pushed to the limits at one of the world's biggest celebrations of consumerism, combined with a splash of culture, which opened in Dubai, Thursday.

But the month-long spree is no light-hearted affair.

The Dubai Shopping Festival is a big, brash business — with one billion dollars, or just over eight per cent of GDP, in total sales last year — and taken very seriously by the affluent emirate.

"This has a huge impact on the economy of Dubai," Mohammed Al Gergawi, the festival's chief executive officer told AFP.

Marketing men drool over the extrav-

[The event]
brought in 2.28
million
visitors in 1998...
and saw daily
spending leap \$33
million

aganza which they say brought in 2.28 million visitors in 1998 — 21 per cent up on normal visitor arrivals — and saw daily spending leap \$33 million in the emirate, engulfing the local population

of 773,000.

And this year will of course be bigger, better and more profitable, if the predictions in the press releases are right.

One of the team which dreamt up the idea launched in 1996, Mohammed Alabbar, director of Dubai's economic development department, sees the festival as part of the successful selling of "Brand Dubai".

The organising budget, from a partnership of government and the retail and tourist sectors, tops 50 million dirhams (\$14 million).

Timed to coincide with Muslim and Christian holidays, the festival provides an ideal vehicle to promote the city state with huge ambitions.

And the 1999 edition has fully exploited the healthy, secure image Dubai loves to project to the world by

hyping the festival as the "family get-together of the Millennium."

To keep the tills ringing from March 18 to April 14, the skyscraper city on the Gulf is lit up like a giant fairyland and stacked full of hundreds of sideshow events with special attention paid to children.

"Our target audience is families who want to come to Dubai for an enjoyable holiday," said Gergawi. "Dubai Shopping Festival has much more to offer than just shopping."

From fireworks to street theatre, rock concerts and films to fashion parades,

from giant replica Indian monuments at a global village to the world's richest horse race, a dinosaur land, a dolphin display... the list runs on and on, in case shoppers should tire of bargain-bunting.

And then of course there's the festival's forte: raffles galore.

Free tickets will be doled out for a draw to be shown live on local television to win a top of the range four-wheel drive every day.

Other paid-for tickets offer prizes of gold — 50 kilos are up for grabs — cash and a fleet of luxury cars.

There are even cash prizes for the best journalism and photography.

Such has been the success that the festival has spawned imitators from Beirut — where the idea crashed — to Abu Dhabi, Cairo and Kuwait, where Islamic purists have cried outrage.

But in Dubai, business is business and the liberal entrepreneurial spirit lives side by side with a modern Muslim tradition.

It would take a brave man to moan about such a money spinner in the only Gulf emirate built on trade as much as oil.

Old doormen an enduring relic of Cairo life

By Christine Hauser
Reuters

IN HIS worn robe and slippers, 78-year-old Mohammad Ahmed sits in the door of the building he has guarded for 50 years looking as if he couldn't stop a fly.

One hand on his walking cane, Ahmed fixes his crossed eyes on the peddler who wants to sell lacquered boxes to tenants.

"Forbidden!" he spits out in no uncertain terms.

Ahmed might lack the eloquence of a Paris concierge and the crisp presentation of a uniformed New York City doorman.

But like most of Cairo's old-fashioned doormen, known as "bawabs," he makes up for it in character and longevity.

On visual evidence alone, bawabs are sleepy, elderly turbaned men propped up in the thresholds of Cairo's more historic buildings who stir to challenge the occasional visitor.

"They know everything about everyone," laments Nadia Al Hussein, an artist.

The aged Ahmed does little all day but sip a murky tonic of boiled seeds and bark orders at a cleaner swabbing the foyer.

Most bawabs fix stuck elevators, clean, and ensure water and electricity flow. Some carry shopping bags or perform errands to supplement monthly incomes of several hundred Egyptian pounds (about \$80).

But as this city of more than 16 million grows, the bawab as a Cairo institution is declining.

"The old bawabs are becoming a thing of the past. They are more ceremonial than anything else," said Samir Raafat, author and Cairo historian. "You have security and cleaning services now. It's no longer a lifetime job."

The bawab tradition started in Cairo hundreds of years ago, when Sudanese were used to guard palaces because they had no local allegiances, said Raafat. "Then they brought Nubians, who were in Egypt but from areas as far away as possible," he said.

Today's bawabs live on the roofs of

their buildings. Most come from southern Egypt, their migration to Cairo spurred by the difficulties of farming before the Aswan high dam opened in 1968.

In the socialist era of Gamal Abdul-Nasser, bawabs were used as paid informants or acted as real estate agents, Raafat said.

Cairenes love or hate their bawabs. "I learned a lot from him — cleaning, religion, honesty," said dentist Mohammad Agadi.

Some say they suspect their bawabs run drugs, take a cut from prostitutes, or swindle money by making bogus repairs.

Others complain that they are just plain too nosy.

"I hate it when they ask my guests where they are going," said an unmarried British man who often entertains women.

Bawabs defend their right to meddle. "I know everyone, where they go, and what they wear," says an indignant 66-year-old Hag Abdel Rasool from the Nile-side building where he has worked since 1956. "The honour of the building is my responsibility."

The modern inhabitants of Cairo who are under the watchful eyes of their bawabs have no monopoly on suffering.

A genre of poetry sprung up in medieval times lamenting the efficiency of bawabs at preventing access to lovers, writes Max Rodenbeck in his book "Cairo, the City Victorious."

"The job of bawab...is one of the most ancient and enduring of Cairene professions," he writes.

So omnipresent are they in the life of Cairenes that bawabs have found a place in Egyptian films and literature.

In the 1950s film "Between the Sky and Earth," a group of bawabs argues about what to do when a dozen residents get stuck in the elevator — send a Nubian boy to seek out an engineer among thousands at a football stadium.

Nobel prize-winning author Naguib Mahfouz immortalises bawab Amn Abdun in his novel "Adrift on the Nile" as a pious servant who brings illegal drugs for his master but saves him in the end.

In street culture, they are often the

butt of jokes.

In a downtown Cairo cafe, groups of men suck on water pipes and gulp strong tea as whining cats weave about their legs.

"Have you heard the one about the bawab who tells his wife 'now you have the meat and vegetables to prepare lunch. I am going to work.' And then he goes off and just sits by the door?" said 57-year-old Hussein Ahmed, to roars of laughter.

Encouraged by their camaraderie, the conversation of the men quickly deteriorates when asked why bawabs are important.

"Bawabs will do anything for a bit of cash," said Ahmed. "If a married man goes out with another woman the bawab won't tell his wife if he gives him some money." Cafe owner Hag Hosny interjected: "Yes, but then he'll probably take some money from the wife as well, so as not to tell her husband that she is cheating, too." Leaning on the threshold of the building next door, 18-year-old guard Mohammad ducks his head shyly and laughs with them.

Hosny gives him an encouraging slap on the back. "This is the new generation. Now there are guards, not bawabs," he said of the teenager, dressed in a shabby blue uniform with epaulettes.

Many bawabs outlive the tenants they so closely monitor.

"All of them are dead or gone," said 70-year-old Goma Abdullah as he reminisced about 40 years in the sunny doorway of the historic Groppi building.

In the humble rooms he still inhabits on its roof, he recalls when famous people came to call. "I remember Archbishop Macarius visited the Greek club in the building. But I didn't say anything to him," he said of Cyprus's former ruler.

As Cairo's bawabs fade, so will the personal touch, however welcome, that they brought to foreigners and Egyptians alike.

"I've known my bawab since I was a child. It was like I was born in his hands," said Moushira Issa, a classical pianist.

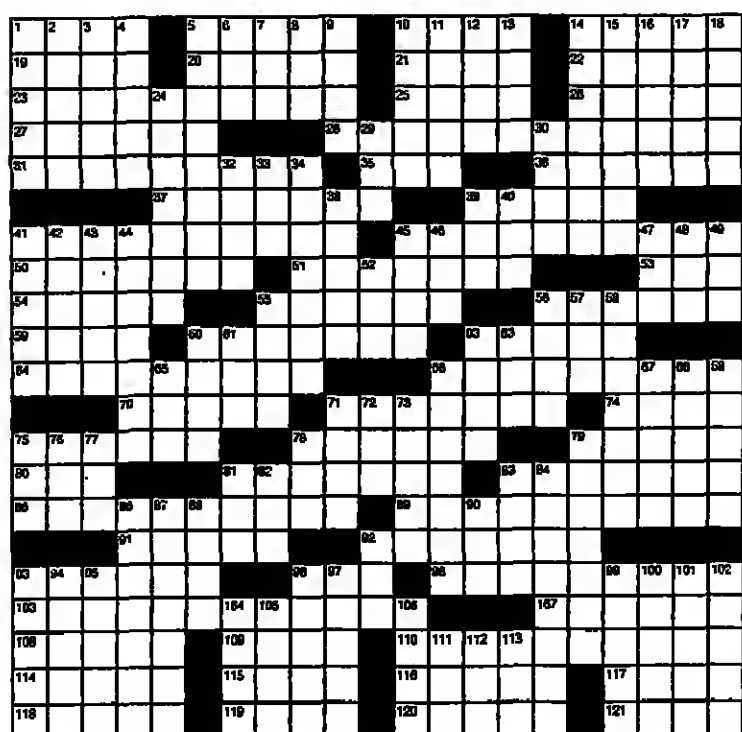
"He practically raised me."

The Saturday Crossword

UNUSUAL POSSESSIONS

By Ed Voile, Gillette, Wyoming

- ACROSS
- 1 Legally recognized entity: abbr.
 - 5 To err is ...
 - 10 Trajectories
 - 14 Crush
 - 18 Eye part
 - 20 Musical practice
 - 21 Festive occasion
 - 22 Expectant dad, abbr.
 - 23 Supplication of an insect?
 - 25 Chess piece
 - 26 Harden
 - 27 On cloud nine
 - 28 Sass of a psychiatrist?
 - 31 Lacking meaning
 - 32 Lampy
 - 36 Fools
 - 37 Produce from Georgia
 - 39 Lady of "le casa"
 - 41 Dance of haughty?
 - 45 Root of a tube
 - 50 Emily Dickinson's town
 - 51 New version
 - 53 North American defense grp.
 - 54 Talons
 - 55 Handles the helm
 - 56 Model airplane builders
 - 59 Chemical chart figure: abbr.
 - 60 Caribbean vacations
 - 62 Former leader of Argentina
 - 64 Rabbit of a big cat?
 - 66 Relative of a ram?
 - 70 Lead
 - 71 Cornering in branches
 - 74 Dwindle
 - 75 Numbered musical compositions
 - 78 Posterior
 - 79 Prose romances
 - 80 Desert
 - 81 Evening receptions
 - 83 Scooter
 - 85 Bone of a buddy?
 - 86 Sailors of time?
 - 91 Stadium levels
 - 92 Boone and Trevanti
 - 93 Bony
 - 96 Carbonyl: suff.
 - 99 Cried in a student
- DOWN
- 1 Ice portions
 - 2 Early-stage seed
 - 3 Goner's sister
 - 4 Times gone by
 - 5 Truck jumps
 - 6 "Born in the ..."
 - 7 Has permission
 - 8 Time period
 - 9 Softy stuff
 - 10 Think alike
 - 11 "Eating ..."
 - 12 Lumbar
 - 13 H.H. Munro
 - 14 Washer cycle
 - 15 Butonlike flowers
 - 16 Eye, part.
 - 17 Oesophage
 - 18 Melrose ready, for short
 - 24 Futuristic viewers
 - 26 Occupant: abbr.
 - 30 Verdi opera
 - 32 Bridge position
 - 33 Aard
 - 34 Run's nickname
 - 36 Some rapists
 - 38 Post-grad deg.
 - 40 Hole-making tool
 - 41 Commonplace
 - 42 Violin maker
 - 43 Horned animal
 - 44 Pile in
 - 45 Gentlemen
 - 46 Amer. ship letters
 - 47 Hall a fly?
 - 48 Flowers
 - 49 1944 units
 - 52 Churchill's gesture
 - 55 Positive
 - 56 Goller Norman
 - 57 "I'm ..."
 - 58 In need of a broom
 - 60 Greek letters
 - 61 Way cool
 - 62 Cornie/Hartman
 - 63 Bard's contraction
 - 65 "A Boy Named ..."
 - 66 Annual cycles
 - 67 Buckwheat groats
 - 68 Bury
 - 69 Hermit's homes
 - 71 Infield cover, for short
 - 72 Have regrets
 - 73 Botanical swelling
 - 75 Average score
 - 77 Montalut Geller
 - 78 Tenth of MOX
 - 79 "Iron Eagle" star
 - 80 Russia or Latvia, once: abbr.
 - 82 Exclamations of comprehension
 - 83 Docking place
 - 84 Set free
 - 85 Everlasting
 - 87 River that means "food"
 - 88 Cut text
 - 89 Singer Demone
 - 92 Roman gods
 - 93 Old Irish alphabet
 - 94 Take care of
 - 95 Silverfish role
 - 96 In-person sears
 - 97 Answer of Egypt
 - 98 Rock or Schenker
 - 100 Contain
 - 101 Host
 - 102 Fainted
 - 104 Thwack
 - 105 Lacquered metalware
 - 106 Government est.
 - 111 Pay attachment?
 - 112 Kimono cash
 - 113 Teachers' org.



Last Sunday's Crossword Solved

ACROSS
1. LEGALLY RECOGNIZED ENTITY: ABBR. (CORP)
5. TO ERR IS (HUMAN)
10. TRAJECTORIES (PATHS)
14. CRUSH (COMPRESS)
18. EYE PART (PUPIL)
20. MUSICAL PRACTICE (REHEARSAL)
21. FESTIVE OCCASION (CARNIVAL)
22. EXPECTANT DAD, ABBR. (DAD)
23. SUPPLICATION OF AN INSECT? (PRAYER)
25. CHESS PIECE (PAWN)
26. HARDEN (TEMPER)
27. ON CLOUD NINE (HIGH)
28. SASS OF A PSYCHIATRIST? (CHARM)
31. LACKING MEANING (NONSENSE)
32. LAMPY (GLIMMERING)
36. FOOLS (MORONS)
37. PRODUCE FROM GEORGIA (PEACH)
39. LADY OF "LE CASA" (DOÑA)
41. DANCE OF HAUGHTY? (PRETENSE)
45. ROOT OF A TUBE (TUBER)
50. EMILY DICKINSON'S TOWN (AMHERST)
51. NEW VERSION (REVISED)
53. NORTH AMERICAN DEFENSE GRP. (NATO)
54. TALONS (CLAWS)
55. HANDLES THE HELM (CAPTAIN)
56. MODEL AIRPLANE BUILDERS (MODELERS)
59. CHEMICAL CHART FIGURE: ABBR. (MW)
60. CARIBBEAN VACATIONS (BEACHES)
62. FORMER LEADER OF ARGENTINA (PERON)
64. RABBIT OF A BIG CAT? (LION)
66. RELATIVE OF A RAM? (GOAT)
70. LEAD (METAL)
71. CORNERING IN BRANCHES (BUSH)
74. DWINDLE (SHRINK)
75. NUMBERED MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS (SONGS)
78. POSTERIOR (BACK)
79. PROSE ROMANCES (NOVELS)
80. DESERT (SAHARA)
81. EVENING RECEPTIONS (DINNERS)
83. SCOOTER (MOTORCYCLE)
85. BONE OF A BUDDY? (RIB)
86. SAILORS OF TIME? (PILOTS)
91. STADIUM LEVELS (SEATS)
92. BOONE AND TREVANTI (RIVERS)
93. BONY (BONE)
96. CARBONYL: SUFF. (CO)
99. CRIED IN A STUDENT (WENT)

DOWN
1. ICE PORTIONS (ICEBERGS)
2. EARLY-STAGE SEED (SPROUT)
3. GONER'S SISTER (WIFE)
4. TIMES GONE BY (YEARS)
5. TRUCK JUMPS (BUMPERS)
6. "BORN IN THE ..." (MOUTH)
7. HAS PERMISSION (LEAVE)
8. TIME PERIOD (ERA)
9. SOFTY STUFF (CLOTH)
10. THINK ALIKE (SIMILAR)
11. "EATING ..." (MOUTH)
12. LUMBAR (BACK)
13. H.H. MUNRO (JOHN BURT STURGEON)
14. WASHER CYCLE (WASH)
15. BUTONLIKE FLOWERS (PINK)
16. EYE, PART (LID)
17. OESOPHAGE (THROAT)
18. MELROSE READY, FOR SHORT (MEL)
24. FUTURISTIC VIEWERS (TELEVISION)
26. OCCUPANT: ABBR. (DRIVER)
30. VERDI OPERA (LA TRAVIATA)
32. BRIDGE POSITION (CHECK)
33. AARD (Moose)
34. RUN'S NICKNAME (RED)
36. SOME RAPISTS (PREDATORS)
38. POST-GRAD DEG. (PHD)
40. HOLE-MAKING TOOL (DRILL)
41. COMMONPLACE (TRIVIAL)
42. VIOLIN MAKER (LUTHER)
43. HORNED ANIMAL (GOAT)
44. PILE IN (CROWD)
45. GENTLEMEN (MANSIONS)
46. AMER. SHIP LETTERS (Z)
47. HALL A FLY? (MUSEUM)
48. FLOWERS (GARDEN)
49. 1944 UNITS (MILES)
52. CHURCHILL'S GESTURE (V)
55. POSITIVE (GOOD)
56. GOLLER NORMAN (NORWAY)
57. "I'M ..." (I)
58. IN NEED OF A BROOM (MOP)
60. GREEK LETTERS (ALPHABET)
61. WAY COOL (SWAG)
62. CORNIE/HARTMAN (MUSCLE)
63. BARD'S CONTRACTION (POET)
65. "A BOY NAMED ..." (JOHN)
66. ANNUAL CYCLES (SEASONS)
67. BUCKWHEAT GROATS (CEREAL)
68. BURY (INTER)
69. HERMIT'S HOMES (MONASTERY)
71. INFIELD COVER, FOR SHORT (MOUND)
72. HAVE REGRETS (MISERY)
73. BOTANICAL SWELLING (BUD)
75. AVERAGE SCORE (B)
77. MONTALUT GELLER (MONTALUT)
78. TENTH OF MOX (MILLI)
79. "IRON EAGLE" STAR (WING)
80. RUSSIA OR LATVIA, ONCE: ABBR. (USSR)
82. EXCLAMATIONS OF COMPREHENSION (OH)
83. DOCKING PLACE (PIER)
84. SET FREE (RELEASE)
85. EVERLASTING (FOREVER)
87. RIVER THAT MEANS "FOOD" (Ganges)
88. CUT TEXT (EDIT)
89. SINGER DEMONE (ROCK)
92. ROMAN GODS (JUPITER)
93. OLD IRISH ALPHABET (Ogham)
94. TAKE CARE OF (TEND)
95. SILVERFISH ROLE (MANTA)
96. IN-PERSON SEARS (SALE)
97. ANSWER OF EGYPT (KHEPRI)
98. ROCK OR SCHENKER (MOUNTAIN)
100. CONTAIN (HOLD)
101. HOST (GUEST)
102. FAINTED (DROPPED)
104. THWACK (CLASH)
105. LACQUERED METALWARE (LACQUER)
106. GOVERNMENT EST. (FEDERAL)
111. PAY ATTACHMENT? (CHECK)
112. KIMONO CASH (YEN)
113. TEACHERS' ORG. (AECT)

Asia looks for early economic recovery

HANOI (R) — Asian nations expressed hope of an early economic recovery on Thursday and urged Japan to play a greater role in reviving the region.

On the eve of a two-day meeting of South East Asian finance ministers and senior figures from Japan, South Korea and China, officials said the regional crisis had bottomed out.

The International Monetary Fund's Asia Pacific director, Hubert Neiss, agreed.

Asked when Asia would recover from the severe financial meltdown that has swept the region since mid-1997, Neiss said: "It depends from country to country. In some coun-

tries you can already see that it has started. In other countries it may come later this year. In South Korea it seems already to have started, Thailand will also come and I guess the Philippines. Indonesia may be a bit later this year."

He said "normal growth" rates were probably two years away.

"I still think two years. But nobody knows precisely," he added.

Economists say better information and financial transparency will lure foreign capital back to Asia and minimise the risk of a repeat of the region's catastrophic meltdown.

Miranda Goelton, managing director of the

Indonesian central bank, told Reuters it was essential to provide more information on ASEAN economies to prevent such a crisis recurring.

"The focus here will be how to prevent crises in the future and to resolve the current situation," she said.

Economists say evidence of more transparency could attract new investors to South East Asia and help it recover.

"Foreign capital is looking for a place to go outside the United States and Europe and will settle where it feels comfortable. It will be repelled if it thinks bad news is being swept under the carpet," said David Feroandez,

ASEAN economist at JP Morgan in Singapore.

Officials from ASEAN — grouping Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — pressed Japan on Thursday to speed up disbursement of funds from its \$30 billion Miyazawa plan aid package.

Goelton said ASEAN hoped Japan would accelerate distribution of funds from its Miyazawa plan, because many countries in the region were suffering badly from the crisis.

She said Japan was also considering broadening its aid to Asia by lending to countries not targeted by the Miyazawa plan.

Japanese Vice Finance Minister for International Affairs Eisuke Sakakibara told a news conference Japan was willing to provide additional assistance to Asian countries on top of the money it had earmarked for the Miyazawa plan.

Philippines Finance Secretary Edgardo Espiritu said the finance ministers' meeting would also look at ways of building a social safety net to help the region's poor cope with poverty.

"We will be discussing providing a system to protect the most vulnerable sector of society," he stressed.

U.S. trade gap soars, fuelling fears of protectionism

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. trade deficit jumped unexpectedly in January to a record \$16.99 billion as imports rose and exports fell in the face of global economic weakness, the U.S. government said Thursday.

The January deficit in goods and services trade surprised Wall Street analysts who had been looking for a more modest increase in the gap after a December deficit of \$14.05 billion and raised concern that it might fuel protectionist pressures growing in Congress.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said he believes the U.S. trade deficit will continue to rise and voiced concern about the potential

consequences of the trend. "I think that can give rise to additional protectionist or restrictionist pressures," Rubin told reporters following a speech to a publishers group. "But I think those are pressures that we ought absolutely to resist in our own self interest."

In a speech to the American Association of Publishers, Rubin said he thought the voices for free trade were "fewer and fainter" in the United States.

"I would say right now if you look at the public debate that is going on there are virtually no effective voices for maintaining open markets in this country," Rubin said.

made it more imperative for the European Union and Japan to do more to open markets and boost domestic demand to help Asia and other regions hit by financial crises and to take some of the pressure off the United States.

On Wednesday the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that would slap quotas on imports of foreign steel, which workers and companies say has been damaging the domestic industry and causing layoffs.

The U.S. deficit in trade of manufactured goods soared to a record \$23.42 billion in January after marking a \$20.5 billion gap in December, the Commerce Department said.

Imports of computers and other capital goods rose along with consumer goods. Meanwhile U.S. exports of industrial materials and farm goods fell, the department said.

The big jump in the January trade gap followed a record \$17.0 billion deficit for all of 1998. Many analysts expect the deficit to hit another record this year.

U.S. bond prices firmed after the release of the trade report and a Labour Department report that showed scant signs of inflation. The consumer price index was up a tiny 0.1 per cent in January, bringing the 12-month gain in the CPI to a modest 1.6 per cent. It rose by the same amount in the closely watched "core" index, which strips out food and energy costs.

Investors have been concerned that continued rapid growth in the U.S. economy could fuel inflation and prompt the Federal Reserve to raise official interest rates to slow the economy.

Economists said the larger-than-expected deficit was a sign that U.S. economic growth was slowing in the first part of the year after a robust expansion at the end of 1998.

A big rise in the January trade deficit with China is likely to add concerns in Congress about Sino-U.S. relations.

China replaced Japan in January as the source of the biggest trade deficit trend that is likely to weigh on lawmakers when they consider renewing China's trade status with the United States in the next few months.

Relations with China also have soured over allegations of spying at a U.S. nuclear research centre, spilling over into Sino-U.S. talks on

China's bid to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The deficit with China rose to \$4.88 billion from \$3.98 billion in December, the department said. Steel imports from China jumped by 65 per cent to 98,508 tonnes from 59,831 tonnes in December, it said. Steel workers who have been lobbying Congress for broad import curbs said supplies from China have been growing as the threat of steep anti-dumping duties reduced imports from Japan, Brazil and Russia.

Commerce Secretary William Daley said the trade data added urgency to Beijing's bid to join the WTO and said he would talk about steel with Chinese officials when he leads a trade mission to China later this month.

"We will not allow someone to jump into the vacuum and do to U.S. what the Japanese, Brazilian and Russians did," Daley told a news conference.

U.S. exports to China fell in January to \$779 million from \$1.35 billion in December, their lowest level in more than two years. Imports rose to \$5.67 billion in January from \$5.33 billion in December, the department said.

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Exchange Rates Thursday, 18-03-99									
	UNITED STATES DOLLAR	EURO	SWITZERLAND FRANC	GERMANY MARK	NETHERLANDS GILDER	ITALY LIRA	SPAIN PESAETA	PORTUGAL ESCUDO	GREECE DRACHMA
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8783	1.6387	0.1945	2.3115	0.2077	0.7080
BAHRAIN DINAR	5.2972	1.0000	1.0208	9.3480	9.7400	1.0300	12.2442	1.1005	3.7504
OMAN RIAL	5.1693	0.9798	1.0000	9.7454	9.5416	1.0081	11.9948	1.0761	3.5740
QATAR RIAL	0.5325	0.1000	0.1026	1.0204	0.9701	0.1035	1.2308	0.1108	0.3770
YEMEN RIAL	0.5439	0.1027	0.1046	1.0214	1.0000	0.1056	1.2671	0.1130	0.3851
KUWAIT DINAR	5.1427	0.9705	0.9910	9.5578	9.4559	1.0000	11.8870	1.0684	3.5410
LIBYAN DINAR	0.4326	0.0817	0.0834	0.8125	0.7955	0.0841	1.0000	0.0898	0.3063
EGYPT POUND	12.1326	0.0087	0.0087	0.0098	0.0098	0.0100	1.0000	0.0098	0.3063
LEBANON LIRA	21.2288	4.0076	4.0205	39.8974	39.0359	4.1260	49.0625	4.4102	15.0300
SYRIAN LIRA	1.4124	0.2668	0.2722	2.6525	2.5971	0.2748	3.2648	0.2934	1.0000
QATAR RIAL	0.8655	0.1634	0.1668	1.6253	1.5913	0.1683	2.0006	0.1798	0.6127
GERMANY MARK	2.4986	0.4719	0.4817	4.6942	4.5960	0.4831	5.7777	0.5193	1.7597
NETHERLANDS GILDER	2.0432	0.3857	0.3937	3.8371	3.7559	0.3900	4.7228	0.4245	1.4466
FRANCE FRANC	6.3828	1.1625	1.1814	11.7427	11.4136	1.1800	14.3764	1.4151	5.3350
JAPAN YEN	1.6713	0.3155	0.3221	3.1367	3.0731	0.3250	3.8632	0.3472	1.1633
HOLLAND GILDER	2.1612	0.3316	0.3427	3.2682	3.1783	0.3475	4.2006	0.3685	1.2300
ITALY LIRA	11.4656	2.1702	2.2153	21.5880	21.1375	2.2354	26.5720	2.3685	8.1300
SPAIN PESAETA	24.7452	4.6714	4.7885	46.4711	45.4995	4.8118	57.1975	5.1407	17.1900
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	51.5551	9.7326	9.8349	98.8186	94.7955	10.0250	118.1675	11.3100	36.5010
GREECE DRACHMA	2.2377	0.4224	0.4312	4.2002	4.1145	0.4351	5.1723	0.4649	1.5000
NETHERLANDS GILDER	4.1059	0.7751	0.7812	7.7108	7.5487	0.7824	9.4807	0.8530	2.9070
CYPRUS POUND	0.7518	0.1419	0.1448	1.4114	1.3816	0.1461	1.7372	0.1561	0.5321
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	17.8045	3.2188	3.2658	33.0233	32.3328	3.4193	40.6458	3.6531	12.4498
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1483	0.4056	0.4147	4.0345	3.9501	0.4147	4.8857	0.4463	1.5210
EURO	1.2780	0.2413	0.2453	2.4000	2.3499	0.2485	2.9540	0.2655	0.9048

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR									
	UNITED STATES DOLLAR	EURO	SWITZERLAND FRANC	GERMANY MARK	NETHERLANDS GILDER	ITALY LIRA	SPAIN PESAETA	PORTUGAL ESCUDO	GREECE DRACHMA
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6330	0.5851	0.8913	0.1885	0.8451	0.5015	5.7079	1.1052
BRITISH POUND	0.6127	1.0000	0.5851	0.8913	0.1885	0.8451	0.5015	5.7079	1.1052
GERMANY MARK	1.1787	2.8852	1.0000	1.2234	0.2082	1.4856	1.0103	1.9599	4.7500
NETHERLANDS GILDER	1.4988	2.9829	0.8174	1.0000	0.2437	1.2226	0.7255	1.2500	1.5888
FRANCE FRANC	5.9350	6.8559	3.3537	4.1027	1.0000	5.0156	2.9765	33.8763	6.5594
JAPAN YEN	118.3300	183.1145	68.8844	81.7887	19.9377	1.0000	59.8460	675.4150	150.7703
HOLLAND GILDER	1.9638	3.2540	1.1267	1.3785	0.3390	1.8850	1.0000	1.13810	2.2037
SWEDEN KRONA	4.8365	8.2581	3.5851	4.3714	1.3714	5.6782	4.0819	48.4895	9.9952
FINLAND MARKKA	17.5196	28.0620	9.8508	12.1108	2.9519	1.0000	6.7896	1.0000	19.3627
IRISH POUND	36.5010	59.5896	26.8255	25.2323	6.1901	30.8488	18.3038	208.3438	40.3409
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.5643	2.5856	0.8952	1.0952	0.2899	1.3389	0.7846	8.0428	1.7510
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	2.9070	4.7442	1.8427	2.0095	0.4888	2.4587	1.4579	18.5828	3.7128
CYPRUS POUND	0.5321	0.8884	0.3307	0.3876	0.0887	0.4467	0.2628	3.0372	0.5881
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	17.8045	32.188	7.2559	8.8092	2.0977	10.0213	8.2439	71.0821	13.7565
CANADA DOLLAR	1.8210	2.4823	0.8955	1.0514	0.2583	1.2854	0.7828	8.8817	1.8810
EURO	0.8048	1.4787	0.5113	0.6235	0.1525	0.7847	0.4938	5.1646	1.0000

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN									
NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES									
DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES									
CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR	CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR
US DOLLAR	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	US DOLLAR	1.1543	1.1543	1.1543	1.1543
LIBRARY STERLING	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	LIBRARY STERLING	0.3591	0.3591	0.3591	0.3591
FRANCE FRANC	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	FRANCE FRANC	0.4589	0.4589	0.4589	0.4589
NETHERLANDS GILDER	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	NETHERLANDS GILDER	0.1190	0.1190	0.1190	0.1190
GERMANY MARK	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	GERMANY MARK	0.5069	0.5069	0.5069	0.5069
SWITZERLAND FRANC	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	SWITZERLAND FRANC	0.3542	0.3542	0.3542	0.3542
JAPAN YEN	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	JAPAN YEN	0.0404	0.0404	0.0404	0.0404
ITALY LIRA	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	5.3000	ITALY LIRA	0.7306	0.7306	0.7306	0.7306
WORLD STOCK MARKETS									
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS	PRICE	ASK	BID	OPEN
FRANKFURT	DAX	5077.43	5084.63	-7.20	GOLD	284.10	284.10	284.00	284.00
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10940.07	10911.25	-28.82	SILVER	5.02	5.02	5.02	5.02
LONDON	FT-100	8140.60	8130.80	-9.80	PLATINUM	364.00	364.00	364.00	364.00
NEW YORK	DJ INDICES	8678.41	8685.47	+7.06					
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	810.85	814.08	+3.23					
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	715.85	716.31	+0.46					
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1297.82	1306.30	+8.48					
TOKYO	NICKEI-225	15717.92	15628.11	-89.81					
PARIS	CAC 40	4170.01	4186.31	+16.30					

JORDAN TIMES
FAX:5696183

Hotel InterContinental Jordan Hosts The Annual Six Continents Club Workshop Middle East & Africa

HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL Jordan hosted the Six Continents Club Workshop for InterContinental Hotels & Resorts in the Middle East & Africa region, from 16th-18th March 1999. A workshop was held to develop the Six Continents Club Programme which was founded to meet the special requirements of the frequent international travellers. Hotel InterContinental Jordan planned also an exciting programme for the participants who experienced the unique attributes of Jordanian hospitality!

HSBC 49 years of loyal service

Far retires from BritishBank

HSBC BritishBank recently held a reception on the occasion of Mr. Edward Far's official retirement after 49 years of loyal service.

Mr. Far joined HSBC BritishBank in 1950, and progressed through the organisation holding various posts and in particular as the Bank's Deputy Chief Executive Officer from 1987 to 1998. Headquartered in London, HSBC Holdings PLC is one of the largest banking and financial services organisations in the world. At 30 June 1998, HSBC had assets of USD484 billion, shareholders' funds of USD27.5 billion and a total capital ratio of 14.0 per cent. Its international network comprises more than 5,000 offices in 79 countries and territories operating in Asia Pacific region, Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and Africa. With primary listings on the London and Hong Kong stock exchanges, shares in HSBC Holdings PLC are held by some 160,000 shareholders in more than 90 countries.

Mother's Day

"Happy Mother's Day means more than have a happy day. Within these words lie lots of things we never get to say."

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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Pagant bands
- Police officer, at times
- "Seldak"
- character
- Antiracite site
- Female graduate
- Worst of bad actors
- Convened
- Removed ties
- Wandering calf
- Potash
- Superlatively slippery
- Land support
- Tan shade
- Covets
- Sandra or Ruby
- "Miracle on 34th Street"
- character
- Best and O'Brien
- Very angry
- Monterey mates
- Alan and Nathan
- Daring feat
- Flap game
- Came to a stop
- Location on the web
- Cattle land
- South Florida city
- Goff's gadget
- Sea eagles
- Actress Rasquei
- Infielder Ripken
- Babyfarian tower
- Japanese self-defense
- Always
- Graphite remover
- One who withstands
- Discourages

DOWN

- Perfectly consistent
- Homeless tom
- Sweet, white wine
- That guy
- Boredom
- Spirit-raising occasion?
- Accomplish
- Shoulder
- Cottide
- Intentionally
- "Desire Under the"
- Buffalo Bob or Bubba
- Like wedding cakes
- Going cheap
- Follow up a deletion
- Clamor
- Sawbucks
- Home of the jazz
- Devilizes
- Oriental nursemaid
- Boozers
- Spiritual vigor
- Neighbor of Pennsylvania
- Piece of luggage
- Long-tongued mammal
- Pittsburgh team
- Heaven's gatekeeper
- Old coot
- Show up
- Periods of self-indulgence
- Right angle
- Knocked to the canvas
- Old-time actress Pola
- Portion

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Company publishing Al Dustour Arabic daily to distribute 500,000 bonus shares to shareholders

**** THE JORDAN Press & Publishing Company (Al-Dustour) will be distributing JD500,000 worth of free shares to shareholders following the approval of the general assembly in an extraordinary session to give the stockholders a 25 per cent of the company's capital as free bonus shares. The market value of the bonus shares is worth around JD3 million.**

Board Chairman Kamel Al Sharif told the general assembly that despite stiff competition the company achieved a good level of gross earnings although, at JD5.7 million in 1998, they were 2.4 per cent less than the JD5.9 million posted in 1997. "The main reason for the decline in profits is the increase in gross expenditures by JD 423,000 or approximately eight per cent," the chairman said. He added: "It was possible to control many aspects of spending but the management was concerned about the effect on the competitive and the moral situation of the newspaper as that will negatively affect the earnings and the benefits enjoyed by the workers."

Al Sharif said despite the efforts to control the consumption of raw materials in

the production, costs increased by JD117,000, six per cent above the 1997 figure. Most of the consumption was in printing paper, he added noting that despite cutting (or saving 156 tonnes of paper) in 1998, the rise of paper prices by an average of JD50 per tonne contributed to higher costs.

The chairman told the shareholders that it was not possible to lower the production capacity of the printing in order to maintain the position of the newspaper in the market. "It is the first year that such a situation happens when it could not be determined exactly which is more feasible in the long run: Immediate contraction to achieve profits to shareholders or expanding and spreading in the face of stiff competition to prove the firm position of the Arabic daily," Al Sharif said. He indicated that the management opted for the second alternative as it would reflect positively on the newspaper but at a slightly higher cost. The board did not recommend to the general assembly the distribution of any cash dividend besides the free bonus shares (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

Jordan Himeh Mineral Company generates higher profit in 1998

**** THE JORDAN Himeh Mineral Company generated a JD26,647 net profit last year compared to JD13,023 in 1997, board chairman, Adnan Al Mufti, told the general assembly. He indicated that gross earnings in 1998 amounted to JD134,969 noting that the modest profit was due to the general, political and economic conditions in the region.**

Al Mufti said the company, as a public shareholding firm, raised its capital to JD500,000 in 1997 to meet the level required by the Companies' Law. He pointed out that Zara Investments Company has joined as a main shareholder after purchasing the equity of the government, in cooperation with a Jordanian investor (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq).

Legislators fail to resolve JTC's 'war of interests'

By Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The resignations of two key figures in the telecommunications sector and a tender for an Internet project for schools is quickly turning into a major controversy with

lawmakers expected to recommend to the full House that the Jordan Telecommunication Corporation (JTC) file be turned over to a special investigator.

The Lower House's Committee for General

Services held a session Thursday to assess the financial state of the JTC, including its assets and projects, as well as the reasons behind recent resignations.

The committee, headed by Deputy Mufleh Ruheimi, heard contradicting testimony from Minister of Post and Telecommunications Jamal Sarai, former head of JTC board of directors Ali Shukri, JTC Director General Mamoun Balgar, and former head of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Youssef Abu Jamous.

The government last week accepted the resignation of Shukri, who accused Sarai of interference in the JTC's affairs. In his resignation letter, Shukri said the minister had ordered the JTC to suspend the Internet project, a charge denied by Sarai. Almost immediately after Shukri stepped down, Abu Jamous, submitted his resignation over policy difference with the minister.

During the heated session, in which accusations were exchanged between Sarai and Shukri, the issues of corruption and

mismangement were raised, according to deputies.

Deputies attending the session said they were not convinced with the testimonies of the parties involved. Ruheimi was quoted in the local press Thursday as saying that each side will present the committee with a report on the JTC.

"We were left with the impression that there is a war of interests in the company," deputy Nazeem Ammarin was quoted as saying. "The majority of deputies agree with the recommendation that a special parliamentary committee be set up to investigate everything that went on in the company," said Ammarin.

Referring to the firm's Internet and Data Division project, which is intended to provide Internet access to the Kingdom's public schools.

JTC is preparing terms of reference to issue a tender to connect public schools to the Internet reversing a decision to award the multi-million dollar contract to an American company, Sarai told the Jordan Times last Sunday.

Government officials said the company's board of directors had decided to award the Internet project to the U.S. firm Ascend for \$10 million, later reduced to \$6.5 million, without going through proper Audit Bureau guidelines for awarding contracts.

"Shukri submitted a copy of the board's decision which showed that there was no decision by it to directly award the contract to Ascend without an open bid process," said a deputy attending the session. A tender was issued several months ago for the project but some industry experts questioned the method in which the contract was evaluated and then awarded to Ascend.

The late King Hussein in a letter praising the JTC's achievements directed that the country's public schools be connected to the Internet and that a nationwide mobile service network be launched.

"We were not able to get at the truth because of the contradictions in the testimonies of the minister and the former head of the company," said Deputy Salameh Al Hiyari.

A.S.E TRADE Thursday, 18-03-99

ACCESS 4646868

BANKS			
ARAB BK	222,000	220,000	-0.90%
NYL BK	1,430	1,420	-0.70%
BL OF JORDAN	1,280	1,280	0.00%
THE HOUSING BK	1,280	1,280	0.00%
THE COMMERCIAL BK	1,280	1,280	0.00%
THE JORDANIAN BK	1,280	1,280	0.00%
THE JORDANIAN BK	1,280	1,280	0.00%
THE JORDANIAN BK	1,280	1,280	0.00%
THE JORDANIAN BK	1,280	1,280	0.00%

BANKS INDEX 228.360 POINT -0.78%

SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1,840	1,840	0.00%
TELECOM	2,280	2,280	0.00%
POSTAL & TELEGRAPH	2,280	2,280	0.00%
POSTAL SERVICES	2,280	2,280	0.00%
POSTAL TRAINING CENT	2,280	2,280	0.00%
AL-RAY	2,280	2,280	0.00%
AL-ZARQA FOR BUS	2,280	2,280	0.00%
UNIONED LAND TRAIL	2,280	2,280	0.00%

SERVICES INDEX 111.480 POINT -1.71%

INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	1,840	1,840	0.00%
CEMENT	1,840	1,840	0.00%
CEMENT	1,840	1,840	0.00%
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CEMENT	1,840	1,840	0.00%

INDUSTRY INDEX 96.520 POINT +0.18%

PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK 7/2	0.530	0.530	0.00%
ARAB FINANCIAL BANK	0.530	0.530	0.00%
AL - EKHAL	0.530	0.530	0.00%
ADVANCED PHARM	0.530	0.530	0.00%
GENERAL APPLIANCE	0.530	0.530	0.00%
AL DAWLAT	0.530	0.530	0.00%
ARAB INTL TRADE	0.530	0.530	0.00%
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UNITED ENG. IND	0.530	0.530	0.00%
NYL CEMENT	0.530	0.530	0.00%
NYL CEMENT	0.530	0.530	0.00%

GRAND INDEX 181.87 POINT -0.54%

Lower share prices drag ASE index to 181.87 points

By Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The general price index of the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) closed last week at 181.87 points below the level of the previous week as a result of a decline in most share prices at the stock market, a broker said Friday.

The broker, Naim Nageeb, said the decline was due to the absence of the "institutional buying" by local portfolios and foreign investors, as well as the early results of 1998 performance of many firms.

Those, whose results showed higher profits in 1998 received the attention of investors while companies that incurred losses or declines in profits saw their share prices falling during last week's activities, Nageeb told the Jordan Times.

The broker indicated that trading in the bourse focused on the shares of the Arab Bank and mining firms, especially the Jordan Phosphate Mines and Jordan Cement Factories, which won almost half the bourse's total turnover.

The stock market's weekly bulletin showed that the general prices index closed at 181.87 points in the past week compared to 183.2 points a week ago.

Out of the shares of 62 firms that were traded in the bourse, stocks of 38 firms recorded decline in their prices, 13 registered increase and shares of 11 companies witnessed no changes in their prices.

The organized market's turnover amounted to JD3.1 million, a 0.73 per cent drop, the bulletin said.

Industrial and banking sectors' price index closed at 96.52 and 285.36 points, or 0.80 and 0.38 per cent down respectively, the bulletin showed.

The turnover of the two sectors amounted to JD2.8 million, or 90.3 per cent of the stock market's total turnover.

The Phosphate Mines Co. ranked first in this sector, with a turnover of JD346,451, followed by Jordan Cement Factories which won JD 266,624 and International Tobacco JD207,898.

The Arab Bank, the Kingdom's largest financial institution, received JD870,970, or 76.5 per cent of the banking sector's total turnover. The bank's share price lost JD1.5 of its price during last week trading, down to JD220 from JD221.5 in the previous week.

The services sector ranked third with JD171,828, where shares of the National Portfolio and the United for Financial and Investment topped the list of the shares that were traded during last week activities.

Parallel market turnover amounted to JD598,630, where Arab Jordan Investment Company ranked first with a turnover amounting to JD150,000.

Shares of 12 firms recorded increase among the shares of companies that were traded on the floor while six recorded increase and nine registering no change in their share prices.

Nageeb said that expectations are high that trading this week will register a "noticeable" increase in the turnover.

"During the past two weeks, share prices have declined to a point that they became very attractive to be purchased at this level," the broker said.

Fluor to cut 5,000 jobs in U.S.

IRVINE, California (AFP) — Fluor Corporation, a provider of business support services, has said it will slash 5,000 jobs and shutter 15 offices in a bid to save \$160 million a year.

The jobs to be eliminated include 4,000 in the 15 offices to be closed and 1,000 positions elsewhere, the company said.

The company also announced it would take a \$130 million reorganisation charge in the second quarter.

Microsoft to open office in Beirut

BEIRUT (R) — Consumers eager to stock up on cheap software before a new anti-piracy law bites thronged computer shops in Beirut on Wednesday.

Parliament passed the controversial legislation, which makes it a criminal offence to sell pirated software, for a second time in as many days after some deputies com-

plained that the first vote on Tuesday had been unconstitutional.

The government pushed for the law, saying it would help Lebanon join international trade conventions and attract new investment.

Microsoft of the United States, a major software producer, said it would open a regional office in Beirut next

month as an "immediate result" of the passage of the copyright protection law.

Novell, Oracle and Integraph joined Microsoft in pledging large discounts to Lebanese students and schools to help them switch from pirated software and cope with the new law.

The step is similar to the ones taken by international

firms in neighbouring countries such as Egypt to boost use of original software and silence critics who say price rises would hit poor students and cash-strapped governments trying to modernise.

Microsoft said it was looking at least \$300 to \$400 on every computer in Lebanon where 90 per cent of the software is pirated.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tripline Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You may have to celebrate today, whether you can afford it or not. It is the spring equinox after all, and this weekend the sun goes into your sign. Try not to overdo it so you won't wake up with a headache tomorrow.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're lucky again today, although conditions are definitely changing. The sun's going into Aries, and that puts more pressure on you. Well, when you get more pressure, you just dig in and work harder, and this time, that could cause a rise in pay, so look at the silver lining.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) The sun's entering Aries today, and that should help you quite a bit. The confusion you've been labouring under should begin to clear up, although not all at once. It's as if you and everyone else are coming out of the fog. Drive carefully for just a little while longer, though.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) During the coming phase, while the sun's in Aries, you'll have to focus more attention on your career. You don't have to, actually, but you'll probably want to, since this could be a phase full of possibility. Action will be required, and quick thinking, but you're good at both. Do a little planning today, just to get ready.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Although the sun is changing signs today, you might feel like settling down. You've had just about enough change for a while. Snuggle into a familiar routine today and you'll be amazed at how much better you feel, even if you have to fix something that's broken.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Chores could interfere with your travel today, if you're not careful. You're pretty good at figuring out what needs to be done by when, so make that your first priority. Then, remember to do the most important things on your list. That should leave plenty of time for romance, too.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) The sun is going into Aries today. For you, that emphasises partnerships — legal partnership, marriage partnership, even teens and dance partnerships, so you had the idea before now. Actually, you invented the idea. During the sun's transit of Aries, you can perfect it.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The sun's changing signs today, from Pisces into Aries. For you, this is rather uncomfortable. It means you go from being lucky in love to having lots of work. Doesn't sound like a very good trade, does it? Actually the work will generate income, which could be spent on pleasurable pursuits. You might as well look at it like that.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) The sun's going into Aries today, and that's marvellous. Aries is in your solar fifth house of romance, luck in games, and children. This is one of your best phases all year, made even better by the fact that Jupiter is in Aries now, too. That means good luck and abundance beyond your wildest dreams. Let the good times roll!

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) The sun's going into Aries, which will shift your focus a little closer to home for the next few weeks. This is a great time of year to start household projects, and this weekend is as good as any, except that you'd rather stay home and snuggle. Why don't you do that first, and also plant what you're going to do next?

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) The sun's going into Aries today. Since Jupiter's there too, you'll have excellent luck for the next few weeks, especially in learning and teaching. Anything to do with education will be easy. If that's how you make your living, congratulations. You'll have no trouble filling your classes. If it's not how your job, maybe it should be.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) The sun's going into Aries, which shifts your attention from personal growth to financial abundance. And you could definitely achieve some of that in the next few weeks, since Jupiter is in Aries too. Jupiter is the planet that symbolises abundance, and Aries is your second house of money. Hmm. This ought to get interesting.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

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Fax links IOC member to corruption probe

LAUSANNE (AFP) — A fax containing fresh evidence linking Australian Olympic Committee member Phil Coles to the corruption and bribery scandal arrived here at IOC headquarters on Friday.

The fax was from Coles' ex-wife Georgina. She claimed the former life-guard had been given \$6,000 worth of jewellery by the failed Athens 1996 Games bid committee.

Her message was addressed to IOC Director-General Francois Carrard, IOC Vice-President Dick Pound, who heads the movements' anti-corruption probe that has already led to the expulsion of six members, has now reopened his investigation of Coles.

On Thursday, Pound announced that the probe into the Australian was closed. Coles had been given a warning after the Pound inquiry discovered he had received \$40,000 in hospitality from Salt Lake City before and after its successful bid for the 2002 Winter Games.

But despite the claim from his wife, Coles, who claims he accepted no jewellery and that his ex-wife is out to discredit him, remained defiant.

"I'm not quitting the IOC," he said.

"My ex-wife would not know Carrard if he bumped into him," he added, hinting she was being put up to it.

But despite his refusal to step down there is growing pressure on the 67-year-old, a member of the IOC since 1982.

Earlier on Friday, Prime Minister John Howard

Von Weizsacker proposed as Samaranch successor

BERLIN (AFP) — German Interior Minister Otto Schily Friday suggested former German President Richard von Weizsacker as a successor to Juan Antonio Samaranch as president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) when Samaranch's mandate expires in 2001.

Schily told Die Welt "There isn't the slightest doubt about his honesty. He would be a great choice to be IOC president."

Schily said he was sceptical about the measures adopted by the IOC to put their house in order.

He said: "It was a cosmetic operation, scarcely more. Even if it is satisfying to note that the accused IOC members were excluded, it can not replace a profound reform of the IOC."

Schily also called for IOC members to serve four-year terms and to reduce the number of members of world sport's most prestigious governing body.

warned that Australia's reputation is now tied to Sydney's 2000 Olympics and hinted he may use his influence to bring an end to the Coles controversy.

He also criticised New South Wales for giving too much power to the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), which can veto any move by the organising committee to sack Coles while he is an IOC member.

The Sydney Morning Herald published front page photographs of Coles' ex-wife wearing the jewellery he denied receiving at an Olympics function in Tokyo.

Howard said he did not think it was a good idea to give Olympic officials the power of veto over something which involves the public interest to the extent of the Sydney Olympics.

"This is a Australian event more than it's a Sydney event, it's being held in Sydney, but it goes to the reputation of our whole country and there is a public

interest in the process, and I think with the benefit of hindsight that was an error," he said.

"There are very high ethical standards demanded of people in public life. There are levels of accountability. I mean politicians lose their positions if they breach certain rules."

Coles last month resigned from the AOC citing poor health and suspended himself from duties with the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG).

But he is still eligible for A\$50,000 (\$32,000) a year as a SOCOG board member, even though New South Wales state Olympics Minister Michael Knight called for Coles' resignation, for the good of all concerned.

"I'd be very surprised if Mr. Coles sought to return, he hasn't played an active role, he's certainly not part of the SOCOG presentation team in Lausanne, he hasn't been to board meetings," Knight added.

"Of course, he will obviously have to face a further inquiry to deal with the allegations about the Athens bid."

"You don't have to be a rocket science student looking at this morning's newspapers to know that some of those stories and photos don't look terribly good for him whatever the final outcome."

AOC President John Coates and SOCOG Chief Executive Sandy Holloway conceded the Coles controversy was hurting Sydney's image and possibly its sponsorship drives.

But Coates defended Coles, saying: "There is no question of prejudging the case. I feel very sad for Phil."

He added that there was no way he would ask him to step down from SOCOG and that although Coles' health had suffered because of the controversy, he expected him to resume his SOCOG activities at its next board meeting.

Sports bosses worried over Athens 2004 cosmetic surgery

LAUSANNE (AFP) — The changing face of the 2004 Athens Olympics is worrying sports chiefs.

The Athens Organising Committee came under fire for switching sports venues when they presented their progress report to delegates of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) at their general assembly on Friday.

The location of several events showed changes from the bid book presented by Athens when the Greek capital was elected host city in a closely-fought candidature race two years ago.

"Seven or eight of the sports venues were different," said ASOIF's Italian President Primo Nebiolo, who is also president of the powerful International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF).

"We have expressed our concerns about these changes which they presented to us. We reminded them that the changes can only be done with the agreement of the International Olympic Federations. But it is only the start for Athens. Generally they made a good report and they are at the beginning of the work," he added.

ASOIF delegates also discussed a proposal allowing them to join the world's most exclusive club, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which is licking its wounds following the expulsion of six members involved in the Salt Lake City corruption scandal.

The IOC, trying to restore its tarnished image, is contemplating major cosmetic surgery in its makeup.

"We expressed our idea that within the new composition of the IOC all the presidents of the International Olympic Federations could be appointed IOC members for the period of their presidency," said Nebiolo, who became an IOC member in 1992 at the special invitation of IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch.

The IOC, which already has several sports federation presidents as members, has previously resisted automatic entry because it would damage continuity.

But the IFs believe a weakened-IOC may relent under further pressure.

While denying any retribution from the IFs if the IOC rejected the proposal, Nebiolo cautioned: "We believe that if the IOC wants a good future, they need the full support and co-operation of the International Olympic Federations."



De La Pena (L) of Lazio Rome drives the ball past Mitsopoulos (R) of Panionios Athens during their Cup Winners' Cup quarterfinal match in Rome. Lazio won 3-0 (AFP photo)

Cup Winners' Cup

Lazio, Lokomotiv, Mallorca stand in Chelsea's way

PARIS (AFP) — Italy's Lazio, Russia's Lokomotiv Moscow and Spain's Real Mallorca stand in Chelsea's way as Gianluca Vialli's men attempt to win the last ever Cup Winners' Cup — and become the only team ever to retain the trophy.

All four qualifiers came through their quarterfinals with relative ease, although Chelsea came up against an enthusiastic Norwegian side in Valerenga before negotiating a 3-2 victory which clinched a 6-2 aggregate triumph.

Lazio crushed Ronnie Whelan's Greek outfit Panionios 3-0 in Rome, following up their 4-0 first leg win with goals in the final 20 minutes from Pavel Ndeved, Dejan Stankovic and Ivan De La Pena.

Mallorca also took their time to get going on the night, advancing after a three-goal second half blast saw off Croatian virtual unknowns Varaks Varazdin 3-1 on the night and on aggregate.

Chelsea, who rested several stars including World Cup winners Frank Leboeuf and Marcel Desailly, ensured there would be no hiccup in their march by netting twice in the opening 15 minutes through player-boss Gianluca Vialli and Frenchman Bernard Lambourde.

Fredrik Kjolner's towering header from a corner on 27 minutes reduced arrears but then exiled Norwegian Tore

Andre Flo restored the two-goal advantage with goalkeeper Mikko Kaven deceived by the bounce.

Valerenga got back to 3-2 after teenage star John Carew finished with class after rounding Ed de Goey although Chelsea's makeshift defence had appealed for offside. But the match died in the second-half when goal scoring chances proved few and far between.

After drawing their first match 0-0 in Croatia, Mallorca struggled to impose themselves for almost an hour in front of their own fans, mindful of the fact that allowing their opponents a shock away goal could have proved fatal.

But an Ariel Ibagaza goal eight minutes after the break snapped the tension and before the Croats could recover from the blow, Mallorca's young Yugoslav striker Veljko Paunovic snatched a second barely two minutes later.

The match turned into a stroll and Dani Garcia set the seal on an ultimately comfortable victory with 15 minutes remaining.

Kamberovic gave the scoreline a shred of respectability but Mallorca were deservedly through.

The Spaniards are thus closing in on what would be a first major trophy. They qualified for the Cup Winners' Cup as beaten Spanish Cup finalists having lost to league

champions Barcelona.

Mallorca have had a colourful route to the semis.

In an earlier round, Scottish side Hearts called for them to be thrown out of the tournament after lodging a protest about the Spanish side's crooked goal posts at the Luis Stijar Stadium.

Lokomotiv Moscow had a 72nd minute Igor Chugainov penalty to thank for their completion of a fine 4-0 aggregate victory over Israel's Maccabi Haifa in Israel as he notched the only goal of the night.

The Russians had already as good as booked their passage in the home leg a fortnight ago when Zaza Dzhandashvili notched a classy hat-trick in a 3-0 canter.

Haifa, five times Israeli champions, could still be proud of their efforts in the tournament as they were the first Israeli side to reach the last eight of a European competition.

Their adventure began when they knocked out French aristocrats and 1996 competition winners Paris Saint Germain in the opening round.

Lokomotiv now have the chance to become the first — and last — Russian winners of the competition as the event will cease to exist at the end of the season.

But Chelsea and Lazio will go into the semis as favourites.



Chelsea's Gianluca Vialli (L) gets past Valerenga's goalie Mikko Kaven to score the first goal for Chelsea during the European Cup Winners' Cup quarterfinal, second leg, at Oslo's Ullevaal Stadium (AFP photo)

Petit set to quit Arsenal

LONDON (AFP) — French World Cup star Emmanuel Petit said he would quit English Club Arsenal because he is fed up with the refereeing in the Premiership.

The midfielder has been sent off four times in his 17 months with Arsenal, including his dismissal at Everton last Saturday.

"I'm totally fed up with what has been happening. I've just had enough and I won't change my mind," he told Friday's edition of the Mirror newspaper.

"If I'm going to be shown the yellow card every time I open my mouth or make a mistake on the pitch — while others are getting away with much more — I'm wasting my time here."

"These people are supposed to be out there on the pitch to protect skillful players from bad tackles, not to punish those players every time they put a foot wrong."

"I'm not a wild guy on the pitch, and for me to receive four red cards in less than two seasons, something is not right."

He said the chance of winning the League and FA Cup double with the London club would not persuade him to stay.

Nagano declares innocence of Olympics bribery

TOKYO (AFP) — Nagano insisted Friday it was innocent of Olympic corruption because top international officials had not questioned its bid for the 1998 Winter Games.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) executive board and general meetings in Switzerland this week "did not call into special question" Nagano's activity, Nagano Prefecture Governor Goro Yoshimura said.

"This shows Nagano's bidding activity was understood to have been appropriate, as we have said," Yoshimura said in a statement.

The IOC reportedly approved Nagano's report on spending, drawn up by officials here in late February, but did not look into its bidding activities to win the Games. A group of 150 Nagano residents seeking a further probe voiced anger at IOC decisions and Yoshimura's comment, threatening to sue the IOC and President Juan Antonio Samaranch next month.

"It is totally outrageous," said Kaoru Iwata, representative of the Society for Inquiring into Wrongdoings of Nagano Bidding. The group plans to file a suit with the Tokyo district court

against the IOC and Samaranch, demanding they return to Nagano residents a total of 830 million yen (\$7 million) in tax money spent on wooing IOC members.

It has already filed a suit in Nagano against Yoshimura and others arguing they should return the same 830 million yen. The case is scheduled to open next month.

The two Japanese executive board members at the IOC would represent the committee and Samaranch if the suit was filed in Tokyo, Iwata said.

"We had been holding off the plan to bring the case until we saw the result of the IOC gathering in Lausanne, but it turned out to be so disappointing," he said. "In the first place, you cannot investigate yourself thoroughly."

The IOC expelled six members and made changes in the site selection process for decisions to be made this year on the 2006 Winter Games, although those changes were not binding for the future.

Governor Yoshimura, who was chairman of the Nagano bidding committee, admitted "the (Nagano) prefecture made residents so worried over the bidding

issue this time," while saying he hoped to "draw a line here."

Samaranch this week insisted the corruption scandal that threatened to tear the movement apart was being dealt with and that Wednesday's dramatic expulsion of six members was proof that the IOC was cleaning its house.

Iwata said Nagano Governor Yoshimura, together with Samaranch, wants to put the lid on the matter with this insufficient probe."

"It treads Nagano people's anger underfoot," he said. Nagano is suspected of having offered lavish treats to IOC members to win the right to host the 1998 Winter Olympics.

The corruption accusations marred the first anniversary last month of the highest Winter Games held as the city admitted destroying bid committee account books. Sumikazu Yamaguchi, a former external affairs chief of the Nagano bid committee, said he ordered the incineration of the account books because "there was no space for storage."

Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre						
CINEMA TEL: 463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '1' Tom Hanks & Edward Burns ... in SAVING PRIVATE RYAN Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15	CINEMA TEL: 463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '2' Robert De Niro... in RONIN Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL: 5699238 PLAZA Ahmad Zaki & Layla Elwi ... in EDHAK EL SOURA TITLA' HILWEH Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL: 5677420 CONCORDE Tom Hanks & Edward Burns ... in SAVING PRIVATE RYAN Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15 CONCORDE 2 ALWAD MAHROUS BTA' AL WAZIR	CINEMA TEL: 5934793 GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria DANCE WITH ME Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	CINEMA TEL: 5934793 GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Michael Douglas ... in A PERFECT MURDER Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 CLOSED

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Prince Firas named director of Paralympics

AMMAN (Petra) — Chief Chamberlain HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid has designated HRH Prince Firas Ben Ra'd, the King's secretary for health affairs, as director of the First Arab Paralympics, which will be hosted by Jordan Sep. 9-20 following the Pan-Arab Games.

Prince Ra'd called on all parties in the public and private sectors to provide the best support and facilities for the event's success.

The Executive Committee of the Arab Paralympics Federation, Technical Committee and the Higher Committee, in charge of organising the event, will meet in Amman April 5-7 to discuss the tournament's final preparations.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Shadian wins RACJ Speed Test

AMMAN — The Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) opened its 1999 season Friday with the Pepsi Speed Test in which 27 participants including two women took part. Khatek Shadian in a Renault 5 GT turbo, came in first with the best average times in all three runs setting a 1:55.71. He was followed by Khaled Al Sai'i in second place in a BMW 2002 with a time of 1:58.31, and Amir Najjar was third in a Daihatsu Charade GTi with a time of 1:59.93. Abeer Batkhi won the women's trophy and came 12th overall with a time of 2:10.63.

Prince Faisal to chair meeting

AMMAN — HRH Prince Faisal, president of the Higher Organising Committee of the Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament, will Saturday chair the committee's first meeting after his designation. The committee includes the ministers of sports and youth, education, social development, antiquities and tourism, and finance as well as the chairman of the Arab Potash Company, Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid, Director of the Public Security Lt General Nasouh Muheiddin and Amman Governor Tal'at Nawayseh, the JTV director, the Games director, the Jordan Olympic Committee secretary general and the Hussein Youth City.

Jordan's team loses to Homentmen

AMMAN — Jordan's national basketball team Saturday plays its third match at a training camp currently under way in Beirut. The men's team has lost two matches and won only one of their three matches so far. They lost to fifth ranked Homentmen 65-60 and third placed Wardieh 88-78. Their sole win was a 77-72 win over Kahraha. The national teams is scheduled to play two more matches before coming back home Monday. The line includes Hilal Barakat, Yousef Zaglou, Ayman Du'is, Musa Bashir, Ma'an Odeh, Husam Lufi, Faisal Nsour, Mohammad Shamali, Ihad Msih, Nasser Bassam, Jan Sahlieh, Fadi Saqqa, Yousef Abu Bakr, Ghazi Naber and Ala' Bilbeisi.

Handball team plays in Zagreb

AMMAN — The men's national handball team Saturday plays against Slovenia's team in the Croatian city of Zagreb as part of preparation for the Pan-Arab Games. During their training camp, Jordan's team beat Duhrouva Club 23-18, but lost to Moslevana 25-30 and Zagreb 18-21. The Jordanian delegation will head back home Sunday after signing an agreement with the Croatian Federation on Jordan's participation in the 15-day Croatia Cup which will be held in two month's time with Saudi Arabia, Macedonia, Croatia and Jordan taking part. Meanwhile, the Jordan Handball Federation decided that the national team will hold a training camp for men in Croatia in July and another one for women in Iraq in April.

Iraqi volleyball team arrives

AMMAN — The men's national volleyball team Saturday will play against their Iraqi counterparts at Al Hussein Youth City as part of four friendlies in preparation for the Pan-Arab Games. Meanwhile, the Syrian women's team left after beating the Jordanian team 3-0 in three matches.

Taekwondo team to compete in Iran

AMMAN — The Jordan Taekwondo Federation has affirmed its participation in Iran's International Championship, which will be held in Tehran April 12-14. The federation also said it will take part in 14th International Championship for men and the 7th for women to be held in Canada June 2-6.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

SCOREBOARD

Cup Winners' Cup quarterfinal second leg results
M. Haifa (Isr) 0 L. Moscow (Rus) 1
Moscow win 4-0 on aggregate
Valerenga (Nor) 2 Chelsea (Eng) 3
Chelsea win 6-2 on aggregate
Real Mallorca (Spa) 3 V. Varazdin (Cro) 1
Mallorca win 3-1 on aggregate
Lazio (Ita) 3 Panionios (Gre) 0
Lazio win 7-0 on aggregate

Semifinal draw for the European Cup Winners' Cup
Chelsea (Eng) v Real Mallorca (Spa)
Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) v Lazio (Ita)

First-leg matches at Chelsea and Moscow on April 8, second-leg on April 22.

European Champions' League semifinal draw
Manchester United (Eng) v Juventus (Ita)
Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) v Bayern Munich (Ger)

First-leg matches to be played April 7 in Manchester and Kiev, second-leg on April 21.

New board to run football association; Premier League clubs to get more support

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Minister of Youth and Sports Mohammad Khair Mamsar has announced that Premier League soccer teams would receive a total of JD10,000 since postponing local competitions pending the end of the Pan-Arab Games had deprived them of ticket sales revenue.

The minister also met with officials from Al Wihdat, Al Faisali, Al Hussein, Qadissieh and Amman clubs in separate visits to these clubs.

Meanwhile, HRH Prince Ali, president of the Jordan Football Association (JFA), has submitted the names of the new board which will run the JFA for the time being.

The names will next be ratified by the minister of youth and sports and take charge of the national soccer team's preparations to retain the Pan-Arab Games gold medal.

Prince Ali's decision comes after months of speculation regarding a change in the JFA board previously headed by His Majesty King Abdullah.

However, the late ratification by the minister was caused by the fact that not all members of the JFA are appointed, and elected members legally have the right to maintain

their seats on the board since they represent their respective clubs.

However, if over half the number of the entire board resigns then the minister has the right to ratify a new board which will be replaced at the end of the original term — following the end of the Olympic Games in 2000.

The resignation of all but three of the JFA's outgoing board over the weekend thus paved the way to the formation of a new board which has side-stepped any possible friction between clubs since a war of words had erupted between the JFA and Al Faisali's board — one of the foremost proponents of a change in the JFA.

The majority of the JFA's outgoing board submitted their resignations this weekend. They include Saleh Irsheidat, Bassam Haroun, Mohammad Hamdan, and Wasef Azar, in addition to elected members Hitham Majali (Faisali), Bahjat Sbiha (Wihdat) and Dahham Eqsaidat (Hashmiah).

Naser Khreis and Mune'm Saeed, both elected, and Hisham Asfour had not submitted their resignations Friday but the board was annulled by the majority's resignation.

The new board includes Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid, who is expect-

ed to be named JFA vice-president, Suheil Marar, Fadi Zreikat, Mohammad Jamil Abu Tayyib, Ahmad Armoush, Taleb Ezmeqna, Abdul Rauf Al Tal and Mansour Kardan.

Prince Ali met the outgoing and newly appointed JFA board and discussed the circumstances leading up to the formation of the new board with Premier League officials.

"We will all work with the clubs as one team in order to achieve the best results and ensure the success of the Pan-Arab Games," Prince Ali told reporters following the meeting.

Prince Ali underlined the importance of providing all necessary means of support to Jordanian athletes as the Kingdom prepares to host the Al Hussein Games.

He said he would work on securing a qualitative leap in Jordanian soccer and stressed the need to emphasise a team spirit to upgrade sports in the country.



Magic reserves make Knicks' lead disappear

NEW YORK (R) — Using a lineup of reserves for most of the fourth quarter, the short-handed Magic roared past their Atlantic Division rival New York Knicks 86-78 Thursday for their fourth straight victory.

Rookie Michael Doleac scored 10 of his 16 points in the final period, when all but one of Orlando's 26 points were scored by subs.

Doleac was part of a lineup that included fellow rookie Matt Harpring and 39-year-old Dominique Wilkins. The Magic again got a tremendous boost from guard Darrell Armstrong, who had 18 points and 10 assists off the bench.

"They never cease to amaze me," said guard Penny Hardaway, who led the Magic with 19 points. "When those rookies come in and give you what they gave U.S. tonight, that was huge."

The bench also limited the Knicks to just two baskets in the first 10 minutes of the fourth quarter.

"We got a tremendous game out of Michael Doleac," Magic coach Chuck Daly said. "We keep finding out things about him."

He can shoot free throws, he can shoot jumpers and he can post up. "I think a lot of it is people don't expect me to do anything," Doleac said. "I'm not very flashy or very athletic." Armstrong was pressed into extra duty in the second half when Magic leading scorer Nick Anderson departed with an upset stomach. The Magic also were without starting forward Bo outlaw, who sat out his fourth game with a bruised left calf.

Allan Houston scored 18 points for the Knicks, who fell 3 1/2 games behind second-place Orlando in the Atlantic.

In Washington, the Utah Jazz posted their sixth straight win, 95-87 over the Washington Wizards.

Malone had 24 points and seven assists for the Jazz, who got a boost from reserve Howard Easley's 17 points.

Rod Strickland, who missed the previous six games due to a pulled groin, had 21 points with 11 assists for the Wizards.

In Cleveland, Shawn Kemp had 20 points and nine rebounds to lead the Cleveland Cavaliers over the Los Angeles Lakers 100-93. Cleveland made 17-of-

19 free throws in the fourth quarter to protect their lead.

Sbaquille O'Neal matched season highs with 37 points and 19 rebounds for the Lakers, who have lost two of their last three following a 10-game winning streak.

In Chicago, the Bulls reached the century mark for only the second time this season — both against New Jersey — and again easily beat the worst team in the Eastern Conference, 104-95.

Bulls fans that stayed until the end of the game received a coupon for a free taco as part of a promotion should Chicago score at least 100 points.

When asked if he knew of the promotion, Bulls coach Tim Floyd said, "Tonight, I was aware. The crowd has a great way of making you aware." Toni Kukoc collected 21 points for the Bulls.

In Milwaukee, new Bucks point guard Haywoode Workman had nine points, eight rebounds and eight assists in his season debut, a 99-83 win over the Boston Celtics.

Workman, signed to a 10-day contract on Wednesday, played 26 minutes and handled Boston's press as the Bucks snapped a four-game losing streak.

Glenn Robinson led Milwaukee with 23 points.

In Vancouver, Bryant Reeves continued to emerge from his season-long funk with 28 points and 13 rebounds as the Vancouver Grizzlies snapped a 13-game losing streak with an 86-81 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Kevin Garnett scored 20 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who are 5-9 since opening the season 8-2.

In Sacramento, Rasheed Wallace had a season-high 25 points, 13 rebounds and six blocks and helped the Portland Trail Blazers hold the Sacramento Kings scoreless for nearly five minutes down the stretch in an 88-78 victory.

"We just wanted it more tonight," Wallace said. "It was a team effort tonight."

Chang falls at first hurdle but Becker gets through

KEY BISCAYNE (AFP) — Another tournament, another early exit for former French Open champion Michael Chang.

The American, a former World No. 2 now fallen to 39th in the rankings, was eliminated in the first round of the Lipton Championships Thursday by Costa Rican Juan Antonio Marin.

Marin, 24, triumphed in two tie-break sets 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (9/7), finally converting his third match point to claim the biggest victory of his career.

"A win over a player like Chang gives you confidence," said Marin, who will face Spain's Alberto Berasategui in the next round.

For Chang, who lost in the first round of the Champions Cup in Indian Wells last week, it was another puzzle.

"I don't really have an explanation," Chang said of his current malaise. "I know I'm not finished. I still love

tennis. I feel good physically. It's not for lack of work."

The main opening day attraction was German veteran Boris Becker's second match of the year. He was to take on Italian Gianluca Pozzi under the floodlights.

Becker, 31, was dominating in his previous appearance this year, losing to Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman in two sets in the first round in Dubai.

Against the left-handed Italian, Becker emerged with a 6-4, 1-6, 6-4 victory in one hour 54 minutes, breaking Pozzi in the ninth game of the third set and serving out for the match.

The top 32 seeds in the men's and women's draws of the \$4.775 million event have first-round byes.

In other early matches, 1998 Australian Open champion Petr Korda made an inglorious exit.

Norway's Christian Ruud posted a 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) victory over Korda, who has fallen to 88th place in the ATP rankings since testing

positive for banned drugs at Wimbledon last year.

World junior champion Roger Federer of Switzerland was another early casualty. Federer, who received a wildcard invitation, fell to Denmark's Kenneth Carlsen 7-5, 7-6 (7/4).

At 17, Federer is one year younger than the second-youngest player in the draw, Australian Lleyton Hewitt.

Hewitt, 18, earned his third victory in three weeks over veteran compatriot Mark Woodforde, a fellow native of Adelaide 16 years his senior.

It was another heavy defeat for Woodforde, who won just three games in the 6-2, 6-1 match.

Hewitt will likely find the going tougher in the second round against sixth-seeded compatriot Mark Philippoussis, who beat newly installed World No. 1 Carlos Moya on Sunday to claim the Champions Cup title in Indian Wells, California.

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RAMALLAH (AFP) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) accused the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) Friday of going back on its promise to stop anti-Israeli attacks.

Hamas made the commitment three months ago in exchange for the release of its founder and spiritual guide, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, from two months of house arrest in Gaza City, presidential secretary Tayeb Abdul Rahim said.

"Hamas officials told me at the time that Yassin would announce a halt to armed operations if the house arrest were lifted," Abdul Rahim told AFP.

"But after it was lifted, they didn't keep their word," he said, adding that he attributed the backsliding to "pressure from Hamas leaders abroad."

The self-rule PNA has

increased its efforts in the past few weeks to prevent attacks on Israelis which could affect the outcome of the May 17 elections by helping to reelect right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Hamas has claimed responsibility for most of the anti-Israeli violence in recent years.

But a senior Hamas official in Gaza City, Ismail Abu Shanab, said Abdul Rahim was mistaken. "That's not accurate. It's the authority that was not true to its word," Abu Shanab told AFP.

The PNA was also supposed to release Islamist prisoners and legalise Hamas activities in the Palestinian territories, he said.

"They released Sheikh Yassin, and they stopped there," he added.

Palestinian security officials

said the PNA's efforts to negotiate with Hamas to halt the attacks have been hindered by direct contacts between Israel and Hamas.

The contacts were made recently between Hamas members detained in Israel and Israeli security officials in the prisons.

The Palestinian security officials said they found a letter from prisoners to Hamas leaders abroad on a Hamas messenger last week.

The letter mentioned "meetings between some brothers and Israeli agents where a halt to military operations was proposed."

The Israelis "appear ready to release some prisoners and open the way for a ceasefire between Hamas and the Jews," said the letter, a copy of which was obtained by AFP.



THAT'S ILLOGICAL, CAPTAIN: Sabine Heidenreich, centre, dressed as a Klingon, and Fabian Zywietz, right, as Mr. Spock, two characters from the Star Trek TV series, sit Friday at a computer to draw attention to a stand at the Cebit computer fair in Hannover. The biggest fair of its kind, with 7,341 exhibitors from 60 countries, will run through March 24 (AP photo)

Satan to exit Moscow bus 666

MOSCOW (AFP) — Moscow commuters can breathe easier now: the transport authority has agreed to "exorcise" bus number 666 to remove its three Satanic sixes, the daily Moskovsky Komsomol reported. The authority will rebrand the devilish coach with the more suitable 616, answering the prayers not only of passengers, but also of believers belonging to a church on its route. The number 666 is synonymous with Satan in the book of Revelations, or the Apocalypse. The bus line went into service in 1983, during a time when passengers' religious qualms would not have affected city planning.

Hotel offers menu for couples hoping for Y2K baby

STRASBOURG (AFP) — A hotel in the eastern French region of Alsace is offering a special package deal, including an aphrodisiac menu, to couples hoping to have the first baby of the new Millennium. The deal is being offered for March 27 and 28, said to fall smack in the best period for those wishing to spend New Year in a maternity ward. On the menu will be a special love soup, "cupids veloute", made of artichokes, shrimp and cayenne pepper, along with "Sweet Kisses from Perigord", a salad of Perigord truffles, green beans, chicken liver, figs and sage. Main dishes include sea bream with various spices, duck with red currant jelly and cognac, and loin of lamb with garlic and cloves.

German man fined for selling mints as Viagra

HANOVER (R) — A German man has been fined for selling peppermint sweets claiming they were Viagra sexual potency pills, police said on Wednesday. The man persuaded 34 men to part with a total of 6,000 marks (\$3,370) by offering the Viagra tablets through an advertisement placed on the internet. He instead sent them blue "fisherman's friend" pastilles which looked similar to the sex drug. The plaintiffs filed legal complaints against him when they realised the pills were not having the desired effect. A Hanover police spokeswoman said.

Caribbean stamp of approval for Elle Macpherson

LOS ANGELES (R) — The Caribbean is to add to its scenic charms on Sunday when Antigua and Barbuda issues a new series of postage stamps featuring Australian supermodel Elle Macpherson. The eight-stamp set will commemorate the 1999 world stamp Expo which runs in the Australian city of Melbourne from Thursday to Tuesday, said a spokesman for the company which organises the Caribbean nation's stamp issues. "Because it's official legal tender, the stamps had to be designed tastefully," said spokeswoman Lonnie Ostrow. "Some of the photos had to be cropped... to avoid controversy, especially with the traditional stamp collecting community."

English village defends its appeal

LONDON (AFP) — House buyers hoping to move to a historic village in southern England must sign an undertaking not to complain about church bells. According to reports here, the parish council in Thurstleton managed to get the clause inserted into the legal documents for 12 houses built near the 13th century church. Its bells have chimed out since the mid-1600s. Daily Telegraph noted, and villagers feared new residents might not appreciate them as much as those who have lived up there. "We felt that who come to live among them should accept our ways, and to change them," said a councillor and lifelong resident Derrick Yeoman.

King received...
Public officers...
closed March...
200 for 500

First And PM...
candidate...
for Israel...
polls

Bomb target...
high...
group...
detected

Airline...
emergency...
landing

Two dead as...
Colombian...
rebels...
storm town

NEWS IN BRIEF

'No Lebanese guarantees for Israel'

BEIRUT (AFP) — Israel will pull out of Lebanon without any security guarantees from Beirut, Lebanese Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah predicted in remarks published Friday. Israel has only two options: "To stay [in south Lebanon] and suffer additional losses of human life... or to pull out unconditionally," said Sheikh Nasrallah, whose guerrillas are responsible for most of the anti-Israeli attacks in Lebanon. Asked whether he thought Israel might launch a new military operation in Lebanon, Nasrallah said: "I think the Israelis have learned their lessons from their various Lebanese wars." Nasrallah refused to rule out new Hizbollah attacks on Israel should Israeli forces pull out of Lebanon. He said only that Hizbollah was benefiting from a "Syrian-Iranian understanding" in its favour, and that "Israel should first retreat. Then we'll see."

Barak leads Netanyahu in poll

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's opposition Labour Party leader Ehud Barak is leading night-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by a small margin in the run-up to May's general election, an opinion poll showed Friday. Barak would scoop 47 per cent of the vote in a showdown with Netanyahu who lagged slightly behind with 44 per cent, according to the Gallup poll conducted for the Maatav newspaper. Nine per cent of those surveyed said they were undecided. Centre Party candidate Yitzhak Mordechai would not make it to the second round run-off which is due to take place on June 1 if needed. The poll showed that Barak and Netanyahu would get through with 36 per cent each in the first round while Mordechai would pocket 16 per cent and Benny Begin, leader of the extreme right-wing Haikva coalition, would scrape just six per cent while a further six percent of those asked were undecided.

Hizbollah injures SLA member

MARJAYOUN (R) — A pro-Israeli militiaman was wounded on Friday when Lebanese fighters shelled his outpost in the southern Lebanese town of Jezzine, a security source said. The source said the South Lebanon Army (SLA) militiaman was treated on site after a mortar attack by Hizbollah.

Air strikes target Iraqi sites

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. and British warplanes attacked Iraqi military radar and communications sites Friday after Iraqi aircraft entered the no-fly zone over southern Iraq, the U.S. military said. The strikes were carried out by U.S. Air Force F-16CG Fighting Falcons and British Royal Air Force GR-1 Tornados enforcing the no-fly zone, the U.S. Central Command said in a statement from its Tampa, Florida headquarters. "The strikes were in response to Iraqi aircraft violations of the southern no-fly zone," the statement said. A spokesman for the command said a pair of Iraqi MiG-23 fighters crossed the 33rd Parallel, the northern boundary of the no-fly zone. The fighters hit a military radar site near Al Shuyab and a communications site near Muzaltah, about 370 kilometres southeast of Baghdad, the command said. No other details were disclosed, reflecting a virtual information blackout imposed by the U.S. military since late December when the low grade air campaign began.

'Ocalan disapproves of bombings'

ANKARA (AFP) — Jailed Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan does not approve of the recent bombing attacks to have hit Turkey since his capture last month, his lawyer said on Friday. "I tell [Ocalan] about all these attacks. He does not approve of them," Ahmet Zeki Okcuoglu told journalists in Mardin, just before setting off for the prison island where Ocalan is being held. Turkey has been hit by a wave of bombing attacks which security authorities suspect were the work of Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) since the rebel leader was hauled back from Kenya to stand trial. Okcuoglu's comments came just before he left for the prison island of Imrali, along with two other attorneys from the 17-man defence team, to meet Ocalan.

Three Palestinian children hurt in blast

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Three Palestinian boys were wounded on Friday when an old shell blew up in an Israeli army firing range near their West Bank village, Israel Radio said. The army said it was checking the report. Doctors at Israeli hospitals treating the three boys, aged 10, 11 and 12, said the children were in moderate to serious condition. The circumstances of the incident were not immediately clear. The radio said the firing range near Rantis village should have been fenced off.

Algeria says rebels kill 10 villagers

ALGERIERS (R) — Islamist rebels slashed the throats of 10 villagers in an overnight attack southwest of the Algerian capital, security forces said on Friday. "A group of armed terrorists assassinated in a cowardly way 10 villagers at Bordj Emir Khaled in the Ain Defia area on Thursday night," the security forces said in a statement carried by the official news agency APS. Security forces were hunting for those responsible for the massacre in Ain Defia province, about 100 km southwest of Algiers, APS said.

Iraq wins little Arab support to end air strikes

CAIRO (AFP) — Iraq won only vague and tepid Arab support here Thursday for its increasingly solitary drive to scrap the "no-fly" zones and halt almost daily U.S. and British air raids.

Without mentioning the zones or raids, the 22-member Arab League issued a statement calling for a "halt to practices" against Iraq which are not specified in U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The statement was a "compromise" to a dispute between Iraq and its Gulf neighbours Kuwait and Saudi Arabia over Baghdad's demand for an explicit Arab condemnation and call to scrap the no-fly zones, Arab foreign ministers said.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, whose bases are used by U.S. and British warplanes patrolling the zones, blocked

official debate of such a condemnation in return for a statement designed to reflect all views.

"Iraq tried to obtain what it could while Saudi Arabia and Kuwait obtained what they wanted," a Gulf Arab diplomat who asked not to be named told AFP.

But Iraq chose to accentuate the positive on Thursday.

Iraqi foreign ministry undersecretary, Nabil Nejm, who attended the league meeting, said its appeal for a halt to the raids and the no-fly zones was "a step in the right direction, but only a partial step."

"It's a small step, but we consider it the precursor of common denominators" among Arab countries, Nejm said on the Qatari satellite television station Al Jazeera, monitored in Dubai.

"We hope that the efforts will

continue in view of expanding and developing [this step], so that it will bear fruit," he added.

During a stormy Arab League meeting in January, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Sahhaf walked out when his counterparts failed to condemn December's U.S.-British air attacks over Iraq's rejection of U.N. arms inspectors.

On Wednesday Sahhaf responded only with a stony silence when the Saudis presented his proposal from reaching the league's agenda, a senior league official said.

Iraq activated its air defences against enforcement of the zones following the four-day air war, drawing routine attacks from U.S. and British forces who say they are acting in self-defence.

The United States and its allies set up the zones after the 1991 Gulf War, saying that U.N. resolutions provided for the protection of Iraqi Kurds in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south.

But there is no specific U.N. resolution covering the zones. Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud Al Aysal told journalists that the league statement balances "Arab determination to oppose what might harm the Iraqi people and concern to protect against any future [Iraqi] adventure," referring to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The statement, read by league secretary general, Esmat Abdul Meguid, "also calls on all concerned parties, including Iraq, to apply all Security Council resolutions and tasks the secretary general to follow up this issue."

The league statement contrasted sharply with the call

Abdul Meguid made at the opening of the meeting on Wednesday.

"We are asking for an immediate halt to all military activities against Iraq which are only worsening the situation and threatening the security and stability of the region," he said.

Also withdrawn from official debate was another Iraqi demand to discuss Saudi, Kuwaiti and Iraqi "missing" since the 1991 Gulf War, officials said.

The Kuwaitis and Saudis have stressed there are no "missing" but "prisoners of war" captured by Iraq when it invaded Kuwait in 1990.

The final statement asked Abdul Meguid to find a way to work with the U.N. Security Council and other international approaches to settle "humanitarian problems between Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia."

The league statement contrasted sharply with the call

Iraqi pilgrims enter Saudi Arabia, Riyadh to cover costs

AR'AR BORDER POST (AFP) — Some 18,000 Iraqi pilgrims poured over the border into Saudi Arabia on Friday as Riyadh said it would issue visas and cover the cost of their annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

"Yes, we will give them visas to allow them to carry out the pilgrimage," a Saudi immigration official told AFP, asking not to be named.

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz later said the pilgrims' "expenses, lodging and transport" would be paid for by King Fahd.

The minister, quoted by the official SPA news agency, added that "18,000 Iraqi faithful arrived Friday on Saudi soil" and were being held in the customs zone in Saudi territory to fill in the necessary immigration forms.

People entering Saudi Arabia for the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, known as the Haj, normally pay a fee of \$18, but this was waived. Visas are issued automatically if the applicant conforms to immigration regulations.

"The faithful... cannot afford

to pay for the cost of the pilgrimage and they are asking only one thing: To be allowed to carry out the pilgrimage," Iraqi presidential spokesman Mohsen Faheem Farhoud said.

Once visas are issued the pilgrims will be transported nearly 2,000 kilometres to Mecca, to perform the Haj.

The pilgrims, many of them elderly, had since Wednesday camped just hundreds of metres from the Ar'ar border post, deep in the desert southwest of the Iraqi capital.

The nearest Iraqi village, Al Nakhib, is about 120 kilometres away, but the Iraqi authorities provided the pilgrims in the large camp of tents with electricity, water and gas canisters as well as food.

The mass influx of Iraqi pilgrims was a clear bid to pressure the United Nations into releasing funds from U.N.-supervised Iraqi oil revenues to pay for the pilgrimage after negotiations failed.

Iraq refused to accept a U.N. compromise offer to send the money through a third party such as the Red Cross and

demanding that \$44 million be deposited in the Central Bank in Baghdad.

Under a quota system to avoid the dangers of overcrowding at the annual pilgrimage, each Muslim country has the right to send 1,000 pilgrims per million of population. That gives Iraq a total of 23,000.

The authorities in sanctions-hit Baghdad had previously said only 4,000 Iraqis would travel to Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and Medina, western Saudi Arabia, this year because of the costs.

Iraq defied a U.N. air embargo this week by sending three plane-loads with some 345 elderly pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

In New York, the U.N. Sanctions Committee met in urgent session Thursday after Saudi Arabia sought guidance from the United Nations on what to do about an Iraqi Airways aircraft which Saudi authorities seized.

But the committee failed to reach agreement on whether to endorse the seizure of the plane before the Saudis released the Ilyushin-76.

Turkish opposition rift emerges before debate

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's main opposition Islamists said on Friday they would not back a bid by dissident MPs to delay elections, exposing a rift in the alliance seeking to topple leftist Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit.

The unlikely alliance of secularist dissidents and the Islam-based Virtue Party on Thursday forced parliament to schedule a debate on whether to delay elections.

A vote on the motion is expected on Monday. Turkish political tradition dictates that the government should resign if it loses a censure vote.

But cracks appeared in the opposition alliance on Friday with Virtue saying it would not back the dissidents' call for a delay to general elections due to be held alongside local polls in April.

"We as the Virtue Party have made our position clear. We maintain our idea that the two elections should be held together on April 18," Deputy Party Chief Abdullahi Sener told a news conference.

The Islamists and the "disgruntled" MPs came together to recall parliament from a pre-election recess and joined ranks to launch a bid to topple Ecevit, 73, earlier this week.

Around 90 dissident MPs want to delay the polls because they were not selected to stand. Virtue, the biggest group in the 550-seat parliament with 144 seats, wants a repeal of sedition laws to save prominent Islamists from prosecution.

Political analysts see further splits between the Islamists and the secularist dissidents over which of their diverse aims should take priority.

"They might continue to occupy the agenda for a few days. But it appears this movement will slowly disperse and Turkey will return to a normal election process," wrote Bilal Cetin in the Radical newspaper.

Turkey's top general gave Ecevit a boost on Thursday, calling for the polls to go ahead on time and the sedition laws to stay in place to avoid creating political chaos.

Evidence of fossilised bacteria in Mars meteorites — NASA team

HOUSTON (AP) — A pair of Martian meteorites include features that resemble Earth bacteria, according to the same NASA researchers who three years ago claimed they had evidence of "primitive life on early Mars."

The findings, made within the past six months, were from samples of a 1.3 billion-year-old meteorite that fell to earth in 1911 near Nakhl, Egypt and a 165 million-year-old meteorite that fell near Shergotty, India in 1865.

"My own opinion is that these will turn out to be true micro-fossils from Mars," said David S. McKay, a Johnson Space Center geologist.

"We're not counting on getting many converts," he said. "All we ask, though, is that people keep an open mind."

McKay's presentation at Houston's JSC for the Lunar and Planetary Science conference on Thursday was a cautious one, since more research is required and

a mission to get soil samples is planned in the next decade.

McKay, 62, was one of the researchers who in August 1996 announced the discovery of tiny fossilised structures in crevices of a 4 billion-year-old Mars meteorite found in the Antarctic. The meteorite was recovered in 1984.

McKay said some of the Nakhl features resembled Earth bacteria in a reproductive phase. He also referred to the remains of what could have been a slimy "biofilm" useful in smearing mineral nutrients.

"It has to be very clear that I have found features which bear a striking resemblance to known fossilised life, but we have not proven they are fossilised bacteria, nor have we proven they are from Mars," he said. "We have to answer those two questions."

Other experts have debated the significance of the NASA team's earlier find-

ings. Independent analyses of the Mars rock known as Allan Hills 84001 have failed to prove that the potato-sized chunk ever contained life.

The researchers said the Allan Hills meteorite contained organic molecules called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, that can be associated with life processes. The scientists said they found shapes that resemble some forms of fossilised bacteria.

In his latest presentation, McKay offered photographic comparisons of the fossil-like structures he observed in the Nakhl rock and those seen in similar terrestrial formations.

The remnants found in both meteorites bear a stronger resemblance to bacteria on Earth than the structures in the Allan Hills meteorite.

Finding water on Mars was a priority of the Mars Polar Lander launched earlier this year. Satellite imagery suggests

traces of an ancient shoreline and NASA's Viking probes of the late 1970s revealed major watersheds.

Scientists theorise that the existence of large amounts of surface water would enhance the prospects that bacteria once developed on Mars. McKay said if bacteria once resided in the much younger Nakhl and Shergotty rocks, then life may have persisted on Mars through a drastic and still unexplained climate change.

"If this proves out, we will have shown that life spanned almost the entire history of Mars, and presumably today," he said. "Nothing has happened in the last 165 million years that would kill off life on Mars."

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